PRINCIPLES OF MORALS

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On p. 88, l. 9. *For* 'that' *read* 'to that.'

On p. 90, l. 19. *For* 'and theopathy' *read* 'or theopathy.'

On p. 112, had we been writing at the present time, we certainly should not have spoken of the speculations of Mr. Mill or Mr. Herbert Spencer as 'not having yet acquired historical importance.'

I may here state that, pending the possible publication of our joint and more elaborate work, I have recently set forth my own conclusions on some of the leading questions of Ethics in a small volume, entitled 'Progressive Morality,' which was published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co. in the autumn of 1884.

T. FOWLER.

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE,
March 10, 1886.

CHAPTER I.

Definition and Divisions of Moral Philosophy. Relation of Morals to the other Sciences, and to Religion. Utility of the study.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY (of which Moral Philosophy is a branch) deals with human action or conduct. But all action or conduct is dictated by certain motives and springs from certain habits or dispositions. Hence the student of practical philosophy is concerned not only with external acts, but also with those parts of human nature itself which are the source of action. Practical Philosophy, therefore, may be defined, at least provisionally, as the science of the causes which determine human action or conduct, and of the differences which distinguish one kind of action or one mode of conduct from another. Corresponding to this science, there will be an art, the art of regulating conduct, whether that conduct be our own or the conduct of others.

Practical Philosophy is so called in contradistinction to Speculative Philosophy. This distinction is, at least, as old as Aristotle[1], but it still holds good in its main features. Speculative Philosophy is concerned, not with human action

[1] See Topics, vi. 6, *θεωρητικὴ γὰρ καὶ πρακτικὴ καὶ ποιητικὴ λέγεται ἡ ἐπιστήμη*: Metaphysics, v. 1: Ethics, Bk. vi, throughout. But, in fact, the distinction runs through Aristotle's works.

or conduct, but with the relations of the external world, of our own bodies, and even of our own minds, so far as the mind can be regarded independently of its influence upon our actions. We will attempt to illustrate this distinction by one or two instances. Geometry is a branch of speculative science. It deals with the relations of magnitudes, and, as such, has no concern with human conduct. Astronomy, again, deals with the relations of the heavenly bodies, both to one another and to our own globe; Physiology with the relations of the various parts and functions of the bodily organism; Psychology with the relations of those special functions which we call mental; and the like. Now, it is plain that all these sciences, as such, fall outside the sphere of practical philosophy. But, at the same time, the study of the various sciences may exert very different influences on our actions and dispositions, and, in this respect, their educational value must necessarily fall under the cognisance of the student of human conduct. Again, the condition of our own bodily organism, and even, in some cases, of external objects, may influence individual actions or the general character, and, thus, must be taken into account in our practical enquiries. Lastly, the industry or indolence, the patience or impatience, the purity or impurity of motive, with which a man pursues even the most abstract studies, cannot be excluded from an estimate of conduct, and may often form one of the most essential features of character. These instances are sufficient to shew that, though Speculative Philosophy may be distinguished from Practical Philosophy, there are numerous cases in which the student of the one must take account of the other. There is, in fact, nothing with which man is brought into contact, which is not capable, in some form or other, of influencing his conduct, and, consequently, of finding a place in the discussions of Practical Philosophy.

Practical Philosophy may be divided into Moral Philosophy and Political Philosophy, the former of which, speaking very roughly, deals with the conduct of individuals, the latter with that of aggregates of men. So intertwined, however, are these two enquiries (which by Aristotle were discussed under the common name of πολιτική[1]), that it is impossible to say exactly where the science of Politics ends and the science of Morals begins. But we may, for the purposes of this treatise, attempt to distinguish their provinces as follows. Politics deals with masses of men; Ethics with individuals: Politics takes special cognisance of laws and institutions; Ethics of manners, customs, opinions, and feelings: the political philosopher asks the questions, in what direction is any given society moving, what are the conditions of its equilibrium, what is the history of its evolution; the moral philosopher, on the other hand, asks, what, in the case of any given individual, are likely to be the principles which actuate him, which of these principles are common to mankind, which peculiar to the particular country, age, or class to which the individual belongs, and, lastly, which characteristic of himself; what is the standard by which his actions are to be measured, and what considerations may be addressed to him by which his character or conduct may be improved; what is the history of the process by which our present rules of conduct have been formed, and what is the foundation on which they ultimately rest. Briefly, then, the political philosopher is concerned with the constitution and development of society, the moral philosopher with the constitution and development of the individual. But, at the same time, the two enquiries are so intimately connected that it is impossible

[1] See, for instance, Eth. i. 2, 3. Though these passages form the introduction of the work afterwards known as the Ethics, he speaks throughout of the science of which he is treating as πολιτική τις, and of the student as πολιτικός.

to pursue the one without constant reference to the other. For the individual is a member of a society, and a society is an aggregate of individuals. It might, perhaps, be said that all those acts which the individual performs, or from which he abstains, at the command of the sovereign power, fall within the cognisance of Politics; while all those acts which he performs, or from which he abstains, without the intervention of the sovereign power, or which he might reasonably be expected to perform, or from which he might reasonably be expected to abstain without such intervention, fall within the cognisance of Ethics. But it is plain that even this distinction leaves a large field common to the two sciences, which thus deal, to a great extent, with the same facts, though to a great extent also from different points of view.

The problem of the moralist appears to be twofold: 1st, to describe the moral nature of man and its relations to the external media in which that nature acts, including under this head both the various forms which it assumes, and the process by which it has assumed these forms; 2nd, to determine a standard or criterion of human action, and, by the application of this criterion to the various circumstances of human life, to deduce our duty in specific cases. In solving the first of these problems, the moralist determines in what the proper perfection of a human being consists; in solving the second, he frames rules and directions for its attainment. The first class of enquiries, which is founded on psychology and history, or, to speak more generally, on the observation of human nature and human life, constitutes what, perhaps, may appropriately be called Moral Philosophy or the Theory and Principles of Ethics; while the second class, or, at least, the deduction of specific duties, may be denominated Practical Ethics. The determination of the criterion might be regarded as belonging

to either one branch or the other. Of Practical Ethics, Casuistry, in the original and true acceptation of that term, as the art of determining right conduct in the case of clashing duties, might be regarded as forming a subordinate branch.

The foregoing remarks are necessarily vague. Their vagueness will be at once justified and corrected by the subsequent part of the treatise.

As this is professedly a work on Moral Philosophy, or Theoretical Ethics, the various questions of Practical Ethics will be discussed only incidentally, though they will frequently be referred to in illustration of general principles.

The main divisions of Theoretical Ethics, to be now treated, may be enumerated as follows: the nature, development, and regulation of the feelings considered as self-regarding, sympathetic, resentful, and semi-social; the Reason in its relation to the feelings; the place of the Imagination in morals, and the construction of moral Ideals; the Will, and the question of Liberty and Necessity; the nature of moral Approbation and Disapprobation; the moral Standard, or criterion of action; and, finally, the religious feeling in its bearing on moral conduct. To these essential parts of our subject we shall prefix some notice of the method of Moral Philosophy, of its history in this country, and of the relation of Ethics to other branches of human knowledge.

In the present chapter we shall briefly treat the last of these heads. We must also explain our conception of the relation subsisting between Moral Philosophy and Religion, and we shall conclude with some remarks on the Utility of the science.

The advances which society has made both in the theory and practice of morals may be considered in relation to its advances in the knowledge of external nature, of the

social medium in which we move, and of our own individual organisation.

I. In the earliest ages of the world, men stood appalled before the cosmical and elemental forces which they were wholly unable to interpret. The reason being powerless, the imagination had full scope, and the mind was filled with fancies and superstitious delusions which often reacted most unfavourably on the feelings, while they produced the most pernicious results in practice. A more correct knowledge of *external nature* has greatly influenced the moral character, and on the whole favourably; it will influence it still more favourably when the feelings and affections have adjusted themselves to the intellectual condition, and the imagination, limited to its proper function and no longer assuming to be the interpreter of nature, is content to raise its ideal constructions on a basis of reality. Meantime, more perfect knowledge of the external world has raised man's condition, in, at least, the following important respects. 1st, by giving him confidence in the stability of the world around him and the uniformity of its laws, it has freed him from many servile terrors and superstitions, rendering him capable of self-respect and self-dependence. 2ndly, by shewing him that the world is governed by law, it has taught him to modify external nature, within definite limits, to his own advantage, giving aim and direction to his active powers: it has thus prevented waste of effort and rendered him capable of sustained and well-directed industry, while it has added to his material comfort and happiness. 3rdly, by forcing upon him the consciousness of the existence of laws of nature which he cannot alter and therefore must submit to, it has laid the foundation of the moral character. Natural Philosophy has taught us that to conquer nature we must conquer ourselves, and that a willing and cheerful obedience to inevitable law necessarily elevates and ennobles the character.

In these ways, Natural Philosophy has incalculably raised the moral condition of mankind. It has in short removed infinite obstacles to our improvement. It has raised both our character and condition. It has also given a discipline to the understanding, a truer aim and direction to the active powers. It has directed the imagination into more legitimate channels, and given more fitting objects to the feelings and affections.

II. But, if these benefits are derived from the study of external nature, the knowledge of *social relations* is even more necessary to the moralist, whose business it is to adapt man to the conditions of his existence. Of all the external influences which determine or mould the moral character, the social are the most numerous and powerful, and at the same time the most subtle in their operation. The social relations are so various and so important, that they present themselves at every point and compel us to form habits more or less suitable to our condition. The laws of conduct generally approved by those with whom we live are impressed upon us in a thousand ways. Our moral education commences under domestic influences almost as soon as we are born, and it is continued by the necessity of social conformity as long as we live, or at least until by observation of others or individual reflection, by higher knowledge or greater intellectual penetration, we are able to acquire independent moral convictions resting on our own judgment and experience. It is difficult to exaggerate the influence of society on the moral character of most men. Its laws are the standard, and its approbation and disapprobation the sanction of morality to the larger portion of the human race.

But the study of sociology is necessary to the moralist not only on account of its intimate connexion with his own study, and the influence always exerted by men when

aggregated in masses upon the conduct of the individuals who compose those masses, but also on account of the peculiarities of its method of enquiry. It is in sociological researches more particularly that philosophers have learnt the use and value of the historical method. Of the nature of this method and the conditions which make it applicable to any given subject-matter we shall speak at large presently. It is sufficient to remark here that the study of history has given a new aspect to social science, which in its turn has given an additional interest and point to historical investigation. That the method has always been judiciously or skilfully used we are far from asserting. In many signal instances it has led to extravagant pretensions, and been made to support conclusions wholly without foundation. Still it has shewn beyond doubt that social phenomena are capable of scientific treatment; that society, both in its constitution and evolution, obeys natural laws or principles which are capable of being determined with scientific accuracy. This method, as we shall shew, is of great importance to the moralist; as are also many of the social principles it has established. The moral history of mankind, for instance, is part of its social or *general* history, and it is a part which cannot be adequately studied apart from other elements. The moral condition of a people cannot be properly understood except in connexion with its intellectual condition, i. e. its fundamental beliefs on all the subjects most interesting to mankind. Religion, art, the industrial and political condition of a people, all reciprocally influence each other, and no important change in any of them can fail to produce corresponding changes in all the rest. This principle, now so fully established by sociological study, has given the moralist a deeper insight into the nature and movement of morality, enabling him to calculate its future course with far greater precision than

heretofore. It brings into view its essentially relative character, in other words its admirable property of adjusting itself spontaneously though slowly to the requirements of mankind; it corrects the natural tendency to treat morals in a dogmatic and narrow spirit. The moral history of mankind is absolutely necessary to the moralist, and this cannot be properly understood except in connexion with general history.

And further it is obvious that the bare conception of society being subject to natural laws, which cannot be arbitrarily changed at the will of any one who has power to make the attempt, is calculated to exercise a beneficial influence on the disposition and moral character of all its members. It must dispose them to respect these laws. The belief which formerly prevailed that the social organisation of a people was wholly the work of the Legislature, led to many rash attempts at social reconstruction; and surely nothing but deeper knowledge of the subject in its various relations can direct the revolutionary ardour of the present day into safer channels. The belief that our power in this respect is limited, and a knowledge of the limits within which it is confined, are calculated to give a proper direction and aim to efforts which might otherwise be wasted, or even be attended with pernicious consequences.

III. The moralist must be acquainted with the facts of man's *individual organism*, in other words with the more important results of Biology and Psychology. It is through ignorance of these results that our efforts are so often misdirected, and our judgments so often vitiated. Man is a very complex being, with a body and mind of the highest and most subtle organisation. How are we to acquire such a knowledge of his organisation as to justify us in attempting to legislate for him, to direct him to his perfection and happiness? How are we to group, co-ordinate, or sub-

ordinate his various attributes? If we had to approach the study of man's moral nature *directly* and without the aid of other sciences, the task would be impossible. By approaching it indirectly, armed with the methods and results of other sciences, we have at our disposal an instrument of analysis which is at least of sufficient efficacy to enable us to classify and distinguish the phenomena under consideration.

α. We distinguish the organic functions in man,—those common to plants and animals,—the *φυτικὸν μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς* as Aristotle called it. This is the lowest element in human nature, but it is the basis of all the rest. The higher elements come in, as Aristotle long ago pointed out, by way of addition to it. *β*. We have the functions—more properly animal—sensibility, muscular contractility, and so forth. Physiology and comparative zoology are the instruments by which these are studied. *γ*. There remain the specially human aptitudes, the social and mental capabilities, as they exist in man.

It is with reference to this last point that the historical method of study becomes indispensable. Direct observation of our own minds, supplemented by a comparative study of the mental capacities of the higher classes of animals, will doubtless carry us a certain way; but it affords only a statical and abstract knowledge of the subject, of comparatively little service to the moralist. It is in history alone that he finds materials adequate to his purpose. From history he learns the capacity of the mind of man for intellectual and moral improvement, and learns also wherein improvement or progress consists. He learns not only that the mind possesses certain powers or attributes, intellectual and emotional, and that these stand in certain relations to each other, but he learns also that each of these principles has a history of its own; that it has passed

through various stages, or undergone various modifications, the causes of which may in general be easily assigned. He discerns also the comparative strength of the several elements which compose the mind; the order in which they tend to unfold themselves and the circumstances which advance or retard their growth. Moreover (and this is a point of great importance), he is enabled to distinguish how far these circumstances owe their existence to man himself, and how far they are inseparable from his condition; in other words, whether they are capable of modification, or the result of causes over which he has no control. History in short accounts for and follows out to their consequences the indications supplied by self-introspection, and by analysis of our own mental phenomena. And here, too, we may remark that it is by the study of history that we collect that knowledge of the nature and disposition of man which makes history itself intelligible.

We have now reached the point at which psychology becomes merged in sociology. Nor is it possible to draw a strict line of demarcation between the two. We encountered a similar difficulty in the attempt to discriminate between Morals and Politics. Psychology (at least, human Psychology) is the study of the constitution and evolution of the human mind: but man exists in society, and, consequently, it is impossible to study the evolution of the individual mind apart from the general evolution of society But, after all, this difficulty of discriminating the various sciences is of no practical importance to the moralist. So long as he employs all the materials at his command, it is indifferent to him from what quarter they may have come.

It appears then, from what has been said, that the means at our disposal for the study of moral science consist in a knowledge of the *results* of those sciences which throw light (1) on the nature of the individual organism, that is,

on the man himself; (2) on the medium, whether material or social, in which he exists. Any moral system otherwise constructed can have no solid foundation of fact[1], and necessarily partakes of a metaphysical and transcendental, that is, as we conceive, of a purely fanciful, character. The problem of the moralist is to adapt man to the conditions of his existence, and the history of morals is no other than the history of the various attempts which mankind has made to accomplish this work for itself.

Amongst the aids which the moralist derives from the study of the other sciences should especially be noticed certain classes of ideas which greatly enlarge the power of the understanding in dealing with more complex and difficult subjects, certain points of view, so to speak, which enable him to classify or sum up the phenomena under investigation. Such are the ideas conveyed by the now familiar expressions, statical and dynamical, resultant, organism and medium, evolution, development, adaptability, growth, history, and the like, phrases which will constantly occur in the sequel of this work. The great distinction, in fact, between the earlier and the later mode of dealing with moral and social phenomena consists chiefly in this, that later enquirers possess in the results and methods of the more advanced sciences means of analysis and principles of classification wholly unknown to the earlier philosophers.

Thus far we have spoken of the study of Ethics in its relation to other sciences. We now proceed to offer some remarks on the relation of Morality to Religion[2].

[1] Such is the idea conveyed in the well-known words of Aristotle: *Περὶ ἀρετῆς δὲ ἐπισκεπτέον ἀνθρωπίνης δῆλον ὅτι· καὶ γὰρ τἀγαθὸν ἀνθρώπινον ἐζητοῦμεν καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἀνθρωπίνην.* Eth. Nic. i. 10 (5).

[2] The object of these remarks is simply to justify our treatment of Ethics as an independent science. In a later chapter we shall treat specially of the religious feeling in its bearing on moral theory and conduct.

To those who are unaccustomed to philosophical enquiry, the existence of an independent science of Morality is often a subject of great perplexity. If human conduct falls within the sphere of Religion, what need have we of any other guide? Man, it may be said, is responsible to God; God has revealed to him His Will, and it is simply man's business to obey without questioning, and without any investigation of the grounds of the commands. But, as we proceed, we shall see that it is impossible to give this simple account of the matter. The codes of conduct prescribed by different religions are exceedingly various, often contradictory, and it is, at least, essential to determine which of them has the best claims on our allegiance.

In the history of races in an early stage of civilisation, we find little connexion between religion and morality. Religion, amongst savage and even amongst many barbaric tribes, is chiefly a cult; it consists in the performance of certain ceremonies, the object of which is to gratify a friendly or to conciliate a hostile Deity. So long as the god receives his dues, he cares little, if anything, for the general conduct of his votaries. The mode in which men treat each other depends not on what they suppose to be required from them by their gods, but on custom, on mutual sympathies and mutual antipathies, on the strength of passion and the checks which experience has taught them to impose upon it. The gods may indeed grant them success, or visit them with failure, but success is to be procured, and failure averted, not by righteous conduct or a spotless life, but by sacrifices and offerings[1]. To men in this stage of

[1] See the remarkable passage in Plato's Republic, Bk. ii. 377 B—Bk. iii. 391 E. There is, perhaps, no passage in ancient or modern literature which portrays more graphically and instructively the conflict between the primitive ideas of Deity and those which have almost invariably come to prevail among the more cultivated members of civilised societies.

civilisation, the text 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,' would be simply unintelligible.

But, as civilisation advances, these grosser views of Deity disappear, and, whatever be the cause, men begin to associate a certain course of life and a certain mode of conduct with what is agreeable to their gods, and the reverse with what is displeasing to them. Amongst all civilised races, we find a number of precepts bearing on conduct properly so called, the observation of which is supposed to merit the favour, and the breach of which is supposed to bring down the punishment of Heaven. These portions of moral conduct are thus embodied in the religion, are invested with its authority, and are enforced by its sanctions.

For our present purpose, it is not necessary that we should concern ourselves with false or imperfect forms of religion. In what follows we shall have Christianity principally in view, and, consequently, our conclusions as to the necessity of an independent study of morality will apply to other religions with increased force.

What, then, in the more developed and perfect forms both of religion and morality, is the relation between the two?

In the first place, it may be remarked that no religion, not even the Christian, enjoins precepts covering the whole range of moral conduct. It would be difficult to construct from the New Testament a code of rules prescribing our conduct in the complicated relations of political life, of commerce, of war, or of international dealings. Even in those departments of morality where it is more explicit, it rather portrays ideal types of moral excellence and lays down broad principles for our guidance, than assigns rules immediately applicable to the varied exigencies of practical

life. Hence, even on the supposition that we are bound to receive, without questioning or examination, such positive precepts as are enjoined by a Revelation, there would still be ample room for the industry and ingenuity of the moralist; he would still have the task of applying general principles to particular cases, as well as of constructing new rules and criticising prevalent rules with reference to those departments of conduct on which the Revelation is silent.

But it may be remarked, secondly, that every advanced religion, by which we mean every religion which has a real hold on the affections of cultivated men, and especially the Christian religion, appeals for its evidence to the moral consciousness of mankind. 'No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us[1].' 'He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God[2].' 'If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him[3].' 'Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him[4].' 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law[5].' Now, unless the early converts to Christianity had been already acquainted with the meaning of these ethical terms, and had already recognised the superiority of a virtuous life, they would have been unable to realise the force of these appeals or to understand the significance of these tests. And, accordingly, we find that the spotless life of Christ, the pure morality of his teaching, the sublimity of his self-denial, and the marvellous revolutions effected in the temper and conduct of his followers, are amongst the principal

[1] 1 John iv. 12. [2] 3 John 11. [3] 1 John ii. 29.
[4] 1 John iii. 6. [5] Gal. v. 22, 23.

arguments employed by the early apologists[1]. Nor do they ignore the other side of the picture—the immorality of Pagan practice, and the sensuality of Pagan worship. But these arguments, it is plain, could exert no influence on those who had not already accepted the Christian Revelation, unless there was some common ground on which all alike, whether Christians or Pagans, could judge of what was right and wrong, pure and sensual, lovely and hateful. Thus, the recognition of the possibility of determining and estimating rules of conduct on independent grounds is essential to the very existence of one, at least, of the arguments by which the truth of the Christian Revelation has most commonly been supported.

Moreover, unless we granted that there were certain rules of morality, independent of this or that particular religion, common to all men, or, at least, capable of being discovered by all men, we should not be justified in punishing persons of an alien religion for crimes not forbidden by their own religious system. A man might at once plead that it was mere religious intolerance to punish him for crimes which his own religion did not recognise. No civilised race could enforce law or order among its savage or barbaric subjects. And, even in punishing men for those crimes which were forbidden by their own religion, we should be committing the absurdity of recognising the claims of a religion which we ourselves believed to be false. If we punished a man for committing murder or theft simply and solely because the moral code of his own religion forbad it, we should, in order to be consistent, be compelled also to punish him if he neglected to sacrifice to his idol, or omitted or performed amiss any of the prescribed ceremonies of his worship.

[1] This is especially the case with Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen. This side of the Christian Evidences is excellently treated by Pressensé in his Histoire des trois premiers siècles, Deuxième Série, Tome Second.

Finally, those, if such there be, who base Morality solely on Revelation, seem to lay themselves open to an objection which is as fatal to religion as it is to morality. They must, in the last resort, base all moral distinctions on the arbitrary will of the Deity, or, at least, if these distinctions have any other basis, they must regard them as only capable of being made known to us through the revealed will of God. In the former case, which is the more consistent, God is really robbed of all moral attributes. For how can we speak of God as good, just, or righteous, if by goodness, justice, or righteousness, we mean only conformity with his own will. The attribution of these moral qualities would, in this case, be simply so much tautology, and God would be presented to our minds with the naked attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, with no claim on our reverence, affection, or gratitude. On the other supposition, that there is an independent law of right, but that it can only be declared to us in a revelation from God, there is a similar difficulty. For how am I to know that this revelation is true, that its dictates really coincide with what is actually holy, and just, and good? I can only accept the revelation as a true statement of the facts, from my belief in the veracity and benevolence of God. But then, before I can assign this ground, I must already have the ideas of veracity and benevolence, which, on the hypothesis we are considering, are to be gained from revelation alone.

Having established, therefore, that there is a Law of Right and Wrong, the knowledge of which may be acquired by man's natural faculties, or, in other words, that morality admits of being studied apart from religion, we may now proceed to consider in what way the independent study of morality may affect our religious beliefs, or, again, in what way our religious beliefs may affect our moral theory or moral conduct.

It may be remarked, in the first place, that a highly developed theory of morals generally tends to purify the religious sentiments of men and to exalt their conceptions of God. This is especially remarkable in the case of the Greek and Roman philosophers, and, as an illustration of the opposite tendency, we may often notice, even amongst Christian nations, the coincidence of a low moral sentiment with degraded views of religion. A noble conception of the Divine economy is one of the surest guarantees of a virtuous life, as, on the other hand, an exalted morality is almost certain, sooner or later, to dissolve a corrupt theology.

Secondly, with regard to the Christian religion in particular, it has already been remarked that what is called the 'moral evidence,' that is, the evidence derived from the purity, the nobility, the beneficence of its moral teaching and the life of its Founder, has constantly been appealed to as discriminating it from imperfect or false religions.

As to the influence of religion, and especially of Christianity, upon the theory and practice of morals, we may remark:

1. That it supplies new motives to a virtuous life. The love of God, and especially of God as revealed in Christ, is to the Christian the most powerful motive that can be addressed to him. But, besides this refined motive, leading us to rest in the approbation of God, as a good in itself, and to shrink from his disapprobation, as an evil in itself, religion addresses to the mind motives still more operative on the mass of mankind. These are the hope of reward and the fear of punishment—feelings sometimes limited to this world, but usually extended to the next. If man be regarded as immortal, and capable of pleasure or pain infinite in intensity and duration, it is plain how powerful an incentive to virtuous conduct, and how effective a

deterrent from vicious conduct these feelings may become. Even the most obstinate will may be bent into submission, and the most violent desires may yield before them. As the first motive especially addresses itself to persons of an elevated and refined disposition, to those in whom the religious sense is highly developed, so the two latter exert a special influence on men of a coarser and more selfish temperament. Hence, as the former may be called the higher, the two latter may be called the lower religious sanctions. The enormous importance of these motives or sanctions it is impossible to over-rate. Were all religious influences at once withdrawn from mankind, it is possible that, except over a select few, morality, so far as it was not enforced by law or custom, might almost lose its hold.

2. But, besides enforcing virtuous practice by additional sanctions, religion, or rather Christianity, deepens the sense of morality and extends the sphere of its influence in a variety of ways to which we can here only briefly allude. To begin with the most important, the Christian religion *personifies* morality by presenting to us an ideal type of excellence in the person of Christ. To imitate a person is to the majority of mankind easier than to act upon a maxim. Such an ideal at once charms the imagination, kindles the affections, and, above all, inspires its adorers with an ardent desire to embody its features in themselves. We are here, of course, speaking of Christianity only in its ethical relations, and therefore the more serious aspects of this question are beyond the scope of our present enquiry. But we may, at least, hazard this remark—that the desire and effort to imitate Christ has probably exercised on the Christian world an influence incomparably deeper and wider than that exerted by those maxims and precepts which we commonly regard as constituting the moral contents of Christianity.

3. These maxims and precepts, however, expressed, as they are, in a pithy form, and illustrated, as is so frequently the case, by apposite examples, have undoubtedly exercised an enormous influence on mankind. In our chapter on Moral Ideals we shall have an opportunity of speaking of some of their more prominent characteristics. Here it is sufficient to observe that they not only embody the purest morality, but that, whether they take the shape of saying, proverb, or parable, they are expressed in language peculiarly calculated to lay hold of the popular imagination, to be easily remembered, and to be constantly ready for application to the emergencies of life.

4. This last remark leads us to notice the fact that there are large departments of moral teaching which Christianity did not indeed originate, but which it may, with strict truth, be said to have promulgated. Such are the virtues of philanthropy, humility, patience, purity of intention. Precepts and maxims on these and many similar qualities, which had previously been confined to a few sages, became popularised by the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. They became the common heritage of slaves, fishermen, and artisans, as well as of rabbis and philosophers. And thus, it is not too much to say that they effected a moral revolution in the world.

To other aspects of these questions we shall hereafter recur.

On the great utility of the science of Ethics it is unnecessary to dwell at any length. Hardly any one in the present day would question the importance of reviewing our rules of conduct, of considering the grounds on which they are based, of comparing them with the rules obtaining in other societies or among other sections of men, and of justifying them, where correct, and amending them, where incorrect. We doubt not that the student who follows the

course of this work will perceive both how essential and how inevitable in any progressive society is such a procedure. But there are in every civilised state certain classes of persons to whom an independent and scientific study of morality is of special interest and utility. Such, amongst others, are ministers of religion, statesmen, jurists, and all who have to do with the education of the young. One, at least, of the main objects which Christianity proposes to itself, is to ameliorate the moral and social condition of mankind; and to attempt to effect this object without some knowledge of the constitution of human nature and the tendencies of our acts is often worse in its results than to leave it unattempted altogether. To the Christian minister, then, the study of Moral Philosophy would seem to be an essential branch of education, but it is no less essential to the other classes we have named. How can the statesman undertake the work of either legislation or administration without considering the effects of his measures, not only on the external welfare, but on the habits, feelings, and dispositions of the people whom he governs? Or, again, how can the jurist assign to offences their appropriate punishment, or discriminate the delicate boundary which distinguishes between the cases in which the law ought and ought not to interfere, unless he be previously acquainted with the motives which actuate men and the varied results which are likely to follow from his interference? That the educator of youth should be fully cognisant of the mysterious windings of human character, that he should be able to trace, in all their ramifications, the consequences of his example, his teaching, his censures, and his approbation, that the development of the moral character of those who are under his charge is his principal business, are surely positions which require no proof. The study of the grounds and principles of morals is not

one of those branches of science which merely gratify a barren curiosity; it is a living and fruitful subject, which ever has been, and ever will be, fraught with the most important results to the highest interests of mankind. For it is the tendency of a scientific study of morals, not only, by discovering the grounds of the current morality, to conciliate greater respect to the laws, customs, and sentiments which are already established, but also, by an impartial deduction from first principles, to amend what is baneful, to supplement what is defective, and so to bring the moral theory itself nearer and nearer to perfection.

CHAPTER II.

Review of the earlier English Moralists.

BEFORE proceeding to the statement and justification of our own theories, we shall pass in brief review the more distinctive systems of the English moralists down to the time of Bentham, to which we shall add some notice of the system of Kant, as being closely akin to that of certain English writers. This will economise much labour in the sequel, as it will enable us to anticipate the explanation of several terms and the exposition of several theories to which we shall frequently have occasion to allude, and which it would otherwise be necessary to explain in the body of the work. Moreover, ethical speculation is at once the peculiar and the most fruitful product of English philosophy, and any modern treatise on the subject must, whether it acknowledge its obligations or not, necessarily build on the foundations of its predecessors. We shall have to combine much that lies scattered in different authors, and to supplement much that is defective; but the study of human nature, of history, and of practical life on which, in various combinations and with various degrees of success, their systems are based, is also the basis on which we shall attempt to rear our own. By these remarks we do not mean that our system will be simply eclectic. Any system, however, which pretends to completeness, ought to be found, on examination, to

have taken up and absorbed the elements of truth in previous systems, as well as to afford the means of accounting for their exaggerations and errors.

HOBBES.

With the English writers on Morals, prior to Hobbes, it is not necessary that we should concern ourselves. With them Morality was a branch of Theology, and, though they endeavoured to solve certain practical questions under the name of 'Cases of Conscience,' they seem to have made no attempt to trace the rules of conduct to their foundation in Human Nature[1]. Hobbes was the first writer who definitely broke with Scholasticism. Grave as are the faults of his system, it is he who may be said to have re-created the science, and to have been the first amongst modern writers to state the problems of Ethics in such a form as to fit them to become objects of philosophical investigation. But, though Hobbes completely discriminated Morals from Theology, his ethical speculations are inextricably blended with, or rather subordinated to, his political theories. As we shall hereafter point out to have been the case with Bentham, Morals are with him only an incidental object of enquiry. His great object being, by tracing the origin and discovering the primary ends of the political union, to vindicate the rights of govern-

[1] Even Bacon, who somewhat cursorily reviews the subject of Morals in the seventh Book of the De Augmentis, never enters expressly on an examination of the fundamental questions of Moral Philosophy, such as the grounds of moral obligation, or the nature of the moral faculty. Perhaps the most important remark which he makes is with reference to the division of the subject. 'We divide ethics into two principal doctrines,—the one of the model or image of good, the other of the regulation and culture of the mind, which I commonly express by the word georgics. The first describes the nature of good, and the other prescribes rules for conforming the mind to it.'

ment and to find what he conceived to be unanswerable arguments for the maintenance of social order, he is compelled, in the first instance, to discuss the moral constitution of man, but such discussion is throughout strictly subordinated to his political aims. Thus, even the 'Treatise of Human Nature,' where, if anywhere, we might expect to find a more distinctively ethical disquisition, bears as its alternative title 'The Fundamental Elements of Policy.' Speaking generally, in fact, it is impossible, in discussing the system of Hobbes, to consider his moral and political philosophy apart, the main thesis of the one, namely the genesis and attributes of a commonwealth, being also the main thesis of the other. His exposition of this thesis we shall now proceed, as briefly as possible, to lay before the reader.

In a state of nature, that is to say, prior to the existence of any government, men are all equal to one another. 'For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself.' 'And as to the faculties of the mind .... I find yet a greater equality amongst men, than that of strength. For prudence is but experience; which equal time equally bestows on all men, in those things they equally apply themselves unto[1].'

'From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes

[1] Leviathan, ch. 13. The Leviathan is the most complete statement of Hobbes' philosophy as a whole. It was published in 1651, having been preceded by several other works, both in Latin and English, treating of the same subjects.

their delectation only, endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another.'

The state of nature is, consequently, a constant state of war, 'and such a war as is of every man against every man.'

This, then, being the original condition of mankind, how is it that any sections of the human race have ever emerged from it? The answer is to be found by a reference partly to men's passions, partly to their reason:

'And thus much for the ill condition, which man by mere nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

'The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles, are they, which otherwise are called the Laws of Nature.'

These 'Laws of Nature,' or, as they are elsewhere more appropriately and intelligibly called, 'dictates of reason,' are, then, the means by which Hobbes effects the transition from the 'state of nature,' in which every man is at war with every man, to the 'commonwealth,' in which law and justice have become supreme. In the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters he proceeds to state them. There are in all nineteen, to which a twentieth is added in the 'Review and Conclusion' at the end of the book. Of these, the first and fundamental law is 'that every man ought to endeavour peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of war. The first branch of which rule, containeth the first, and fundamental law of

nature; which is, to seek peace, and follow it. The second, the sum of the right of nature; which is, by all means we can, to defend ourselves. From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavour peace, is derived this second law; that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth, as for peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself. For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing any thing he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of war. But if other men will not lay down their right, as well as he; then there is no reason for any one, to divest himself of his: for that were to expose himself to prey, which no man is bound to, rather than to dispose himself to peace. This is that law of the Gospel; whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them. And that law of all men, quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris[1].'

'From that law of nature, by which we are obliged to transfer to another, such rights, as being retained, hinder the peace of mankind, there followeth a third; which is this, that men perform their covenants made: without which, covenants are in vain, and but empty words; and the right of all men to all things remaining, we are still in the condition of war[2].'

On these three fundamental 'Laws of Nature' the 'commonwealth' is constructed. Each individual citizen transfers his natural rights to his sovereign, who, in turn, is bound to protect him against all aggressors, and the contract, having once been made, is binding for ever on the contractors and their successors.

By this contract the citizen has parted entirely with his

[1] Ch. 14. [2] Ch. 15

rights, at least while the sovereign is capable of defending him (for, when protection can no longer be afforded, the end of the contract being frustrated, the contract itself is void), and, unless he be commanded to hurt himself, is bound to obey the sovereign implicitly in all things. This obligation admits of no other exceptions. The command of the sovereign is to the subject the absolute and final rule of conduct, the measure of right and wrong. It extends even to the expression of his opinions, and the subject is bound to conform, at least outwardly, to the religion prescribed by his sovereign. This is the cardinal proposition of Hobbes' practical philosophy, and, as such, he loses no opportunity of enforcing and illustrating it. Of the many passages in which the doctrine is stated, one must here suffice:

'In the state of nature, where every man is his own judge, and differeth from other concerning the names and appellations of things, and from those differences arise quarrels and breach of peace, it was necessary there should be a common measure of all things, that might fall in controversy. As for example; of what is to be called right, what good, what virtue, what much, what little, what *meum* and *tuum*, what a pound, what a quart, etc. For in these things private judgments may differ, and beget controversy. This common measure, some say, is right reason: with whom I should consent, if there were any such thing to be found or known *in rerum naturâ*. But commonly they that call for right reason to decide any controversy, do mean their own. But this is certain, seeing right reason is not existent, the reason of some man or men must supply the place thereof; and that man or men, is he or they, that have the sovereign power, as hath been already proved; and consequently the civil laws are to all subjects the measures of their actions, whereby to determine, whether

they be right or wrong, profitable or unprofitable, virtuous or vicious; and by them the use and definition of all names not agreed upon, and tending to controversy, shall be established[1].'

To this implicit obedience of the subject to the sovereign, which, in Hobbes' view, is the very condition of all good government, the great obstacle is found in the fancied rights of conscience, and these, accordingly, he would ruthlessly sweep away. Amongst the 'opinions, contrary to the peace of mankind, upon weak and false principles,' which 'have nevertheless been so deeply rooted in them,' he enumerates these: 'that men shall judge of what is lawful and unlawful, not by the law itself, but by their own consciences; that is to say, by their own private judgments: that subjects sin in obeying the commands of the commonwealth, unless they themselves have first judged them to be lawful: that their propriety in their riches is such, as to exclude the dominion which the commonwealth hath over the same: that it is lawful for subjects to kill such as they call tyrants: that the sovereign power may be divided, and the like[2].'

But, if the will of the sovereign is to be to the subject the only measure of right and wrong, is the sovereign himself to be left without any rule, and to shape his actions simply by his arbitrary caprice? No. To him the rule of right and wrong is given by the Laws of Nature, which are the Laws of God, though to God alone, and not to his subjects, is he responsible for acting in accordance with them. This position, though frequently ignored in popular statements of Hobbes' system, is an essential part of his doctrines, and is repeatedly insisted on.

[1] De Corpore Politico, Part ii. ch. 10 (Molesworth's Edition of Hobbes' Works, English, vol. iv. pp. 225, 226).

[2] Leviathan, ch. 30.

'The office of the sovereign, be it a monarch or an assembly, consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the sovereign power, namely the procuration of the safety of the people; to which he is obliged by the law of nature, and to render an account thereof to God, the author of that law, and to none but him[1].'

And, shortly afterwards, in the same chapter:

'The safety of the people requireth further, from him, or them that have the sovereign power, that justice be equally administered to all degrees of people; that is, that as well the rich and mighty, as poor and obscure persons, may be righted of the injuries done them; so as the great may have no greater hope of impunity, when they do violence, dishonour, or any injury to the meaner sort, than when one of these does the like to one of them: for in this consisteth equity; to which, as being a precept of the law of nature, a sovereign is as much subject, as any of the meanest of his people.'

In the treatise De Corpore Politico there is a passage in which these positions are stated with peculiar distinctness:

'For the duty of a sovereign consisteth in the good government of the people. And although the acts of sovereign power be no injuries to the subjects who have consented to the same by their implicit wills, yet when they tend to the hurt of the people in general, they be breaches of the law of nature, and of the divine law; and consequently, the contrary acts are the duties of sovereigns, and required at their hands to the utmost of their endeavour, by God Almighty, under the pain of eternal death[2].'

This is, in brief, Hobbes' system of Moral and Political Philosophy. The sense in which it is called an *arbitrary* system will be abundantly evident from what has already

[1] Leviathan, ch. 30.

[2] De Corpore Politico, ch. 9.

been said. To the subject the mere *arbitrium* of the sovereign is the sole rule of conduct, though the sovereign himself is placed under a Law of Nature, for obedience to which he is responsible to God. The system is also called a *selfish* system, because, whether in the 'state of nature' or in the 'commonwealth,' Hobbes recognises no feelings except those which are purely self-regarding. The subject can only be expected to do what is right because he will be punished if he does wrong, and the ruler can only be expected to submit himself to the Laws of Nature because God will punish him if he violates them. In conformity with these principles, he is driven to propound what to the great majority of men must appear the most distorted and grotesque definitions of some of those passions and affections of our nature which have relation to others. 'Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called *Laughter;* and is caused either by some sudden act of their own that pleaseth them, or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves.' 'On the contrary, sudden dejection is the passion that causeth *Weeping;* and is caused by such accidents as suddenly take away some vehement hope or some prop of their power.' 'Grief for the calamity of another is *Pity;* and ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himself; and therefore is called also *Compassion*, and, in the phrase of this present time, a *Fellow-Feeling*[1].' '*Good-Will* or *Charity* is simply the pleasant feeling which accrues to a man, when he perceives his own power to help others[2].'

Similarly, every act of every man is dictated by a regard to his own interest. This is the case even with a gift:

'No man giveth, but with intention of good to himself;

[1] Leviathan, ch. 6. Similar definitions are given in Human Nature, ch 9.

[2] Human Nature, ch. 9.

because gift is voluntary, and of all voluntary acts, the object is to every man his own good[1].'

'Such,' says Mackintosh[2], 'were the expedients to which a man of the highest class of understanding was driven, in order to evade the admission of the simple and evident truth, that there are in our nature perfectly disinterested passions, which seek the well-being of others as their object and end, without looking beyond to self, or pleasure, or happiness. A proposition, from which such a man could attempt to escape only by such means, may be strongly presumed to be true.'

Hobbes' doctrine on 'Liberty and Necessity' is not immediately connected with the other parts of his system, and we shall defer any mention of it till we come to treat expressly of that subject.

In reviewing the above scheme of Human Nature and Society, the first thing that strikes us is its utterly unhistorical character. Where is or ever was the 'state of nature' which Hobbes depicts? For in the 'many places where they live so now[3],' he recognises, at least, 'the government of small families,' a fact which is utterly irreconcileable with his theory. And what historical evidence is there, in the case of any given nation, of the original 'contract[4],' by which men transferred their 'natural rights' to the sovereign, and he, in turn, undertook their protection? But, even apart from the want of historical evidence, it seems strange that it should never have occurred to so acute a reasoner to ask how it was that men who were repelled from one another by fear, and were in a constant

[1] Leviathan, ch. 15.

[2] Progress of Ethical Philosophy, Section 4.

[3] Leviathan, ch. 13.

[4] Hobbes' theory of the Original Contract may have been suggested by the hypothesis started by Glaucon in the Second Book of Plato's Republic.

state of internecine war, should have had the courage and mutual confidence to meet for such a purpose.

Recent investigations, to which we shall frequently refer in the course of this work, have abundantly confirmed a theory of the origin of Society, already propounded by Aristotle and Plato[1], which is diametrically the opposite of that of Hobbes. The 'commonwealth' was not made; it grew. The original unit of society, so far as we can go back in the history of mankind[2], was the family; in time, the family expanded into the tribe, and the tribe, or an union of tribes, into the state. This was a gradual process, and there has never been any such marked and definite transition from the 'state of nature' to the 'commonwealth' as that which Hobbes imagined.

With the 'contract,' the relations between sovereign and subject, so far as they are founded on the idea of the contract, of course disappear.

Not only, as it seems to us, does the absence of the historical point of view account for the theories of contract and of arbitrary power, which are two of the most distinctive features of Hobbes' philosophy, but also for a third, which is no less distinctive, the resolution of all our feelings into self-love. Had not Hobbes started with an idea of a former 'dissolute condition of masterless men' in which 'every man was at war with every man,' he could hardly

[1] See the First Book of Aristotle's Politics, and the Third Book of Plato's Laws, the latter of which anticipates the theory afterwards developed by Aristotle.

[2] The theory maintained by Mr. Mc Lennan (in his Primitive Marriage) that in the oldest type of society to which we can go back, as exemplified in still extant races, the tribe, and not the family, is the social unit, the family relations, in the sense in which we now understand them, having been a subsequent development, does not, in any material respect, affect our argument. It is sufficient for our purpose, if it be acknowledged, as Mr. M Lennan does distinctly acknowledge, that man, so far as we can go back in the human record, was a 'gregarious' animal. We shall recur to Mr. Mc Lennan's position in the chapter on Sympathy.

have devised a theory so entirely at variance with the facts of human nature and human life as the 'selfish theory' to which we have alluded. Certainly, had he recognised the family as the original unit of society, he could hardly have failed to recognise also, as having existed in man from the first, the various feelings appropriate to that relation, and to have perceived that, though his sympathies might be originally confined to the family circle, they were, at least, active within it. But starting with the idea that man was at first a solitary, and, in consequence, a purely selfish being, and not, like Hartley, recognising a principle of moral growth, he concluded that, however skilfully his feelings might be veiled, he was purely selfish still. It is then, as we conceive, to his singularly unhistorical mode of treatment that the graver defects of Hobbes' system are due.

There are one or two other peculiarities in Hobbes' speculations which are well worthy of attention. Living in times when men were suffering intensely from anarchy and repeated changes of government, in the very midst of fierce religious and political struggles which could be decided only by the arbitrament of the sword, it was his great practical aim to exalt the authority of law, to persuade men that it was better (nay, that it was their duty) to submit to any government, rather than to change it. But in the attempt to exalt the law, he depreciated the authority of the individual conscience and the force of public opinion, and, as we shall hereafter have occasion to point out in the case of Bentham, failed to see that it is in the moral sentiment of the citizens that the law has its origin and can alone find its ultimate support.

It is plain, moreover, from the cynical turn of mind displayed in Hobbes' writings, that he had no faith in human nature. Men might be compelled by fear of punishment

to live peacefully together, and to respect one another's rights, but he had no idea that there was in human nature itself a latent capacity of improvement, and that men might be brought to do right spontaneously, and merely as a matter of preference. Of morality in the highest sense of the term, morality, that is to say, enforced solely by the action of a man's own conscience, there is no trace in his system.

Such are some of the leading defects in Hobbes' theory of man and society. They all have their root in the partial and imperfect view of human nature which he assumes at starting. By his earlier opponents the charges usually brought against his system were that it rested morality solely on the accidental structure of man, as distinct from the eternal order of nature, that, consequently, it was relative, namely relative to human nature, as opposed to absolute; arbitrary, depending on the mere nature of man, as opposed to the nature of things; fantastical, or founded in our own imaginations, as opposed to real or essential; mutable as opposed to immutable; temporary as opposed to eternal. The value of these criticisms we shall presently have an opportunity of estimating. It is sufficient here to observe that we should ourselves rather sympathise with those opponents of Hobbes who, like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler, regarded the great defect of his scheme as consisting not so much in its being founded on a mere view of human nature as in its being founded on an imperfect and inadequate view of it.

The speculations of Hobbes created English Moral Philosophy by antagonism. We now proceed to give some account of the more characteristic systems which were designed, in whole or in part, to furnish a confutation of his theories.

CUDWORTH AND CLARKE.

Omitting Cumberland, whose criticism has not exerted any permanent influence on the history of Moral Theory, the antagonists of Hobbes may be divided into two classes, those who, like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, would regard his theory as based on a partial and inadequate representation of human nature, and those who would altogether reject his point of view, as being purely 'arbitrary,' and, as they would phrase it, founded on 'the particular constitution of man[1].' The latter class of writers find in the

[1] The arrangement we have adopted, it will at once be seen, is not a chronological one. We believe it to be, on the whole, the most convenient for the study of the subject, though it would be impossible to point out any single principle on which it proceeds. The student must, of course, in each case, bear in mind the date of the writer and of the first publication of his principal works, for which purpose the following table will be found useful.

Hobbes, b. 1588, d. 1679. The Treatise on Human Nature was written in 1640, but not published till 1650. The Leviathan was first published in 1651.

Cudworth, b. 1617, d. 1688. The Treatise on Eternal and Immutable Morality was not published till 1731, though the work entitled 'The True Intellectual System of the Universe' was published during his lifetime in 1678.

Locke, b. 1632, d. 1704. The Essay on Human Understanding was first published in 1690.

Shaftesbury, b. 1671, d 1713. Inquiry concerning Virtue, 1699.

Clarke, b. 1675, d. 1729. Boyle Lectures 1704–5 (published in 1705–6).

Mandeville, b. 1670 about, d. 1733. The poem entitled 'The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turned Honest' was published in 1714. On this he afterwards wrote remarks, and published the whole under the title of 'The Fable of the Bees' in 1723. A second volume, with the same title, was published in 1728.

Hutcheson, b. 1694, d. 1747. Inquiry into the Nature of Beauty and Virtue, 1725. Treatise on the Passions, 1728.

Butler, b. 1692, d. 1752. Sermons, 1725. Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, published as an Appendix to the Analogy in 1736.

Hartley, b. 1705, d. 1757. Observations on Man, 1749.

Hume, b. 1711, d. 1776. Treatise of Human Nature, 1738. Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, 1751.

Price, b. 1723, d. 1791. Essay on Moral Good and Evil, 1757.

Reason that element which unites man with the rest of the Intelligible Universe (God and intermediate intelligences), and hence it is to the Reason alone, as they conceive, that we must look for the ultimate grounds and justification of morality. Cudworth, Clarke, and Price are the most prominent members of this school, a school which is sometimes known as the 'Rational School.'

Cudworth's system admits of a brief and easy statement. The main thesis of his 'Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality' is that there exist in the mind of man a number of ideas (*νοήματα*) entirely independent of sense and matter, not derived from the external world, either directly or indirectly, but part of the furniture, so to speak, of the mind itself. These ideas are *immutable*, for they are common to all minds, being of the very nature or essence of mind, so that it would be a contradiction in terms to speak of any mind as being without them. Moreover, they are *eternal*, for they have existed from all eternity in the mind of God, even when there was no other mind in existence. Amongst these ideas are the ideas of 'Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust,' which are, therefore, eternal and immutable, not 'alterable by mere Will or Opinion,' even though that Will be the Will of God himself.

From this it is evident that his only practical test of the character of an action must be conformity with the

Adam Smith, b. 1723, d. 1790. Theory of Moral Sentiments, 1759.

Abraham Tucker, b. 1705, d. 1774. The earlier volumes of 'The Light of Nature pursued' (containing the chapters bearing on Morals) were published in 1768, the later volumes after his death.

Kant, b. 1724, d. 1804. Kritik der reinen Vernunft, 1781. Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, 1785. Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, 1788. Metaphysik der Sitten, 1797.

Paley, b. 1743, d. 1805. Elements of Moral and Political Philosophy, 1785.

Bentham, b. 1748, d. 1832. Principles of Morals and Legislation, printed in 1780, first published in 1789

eternal and immutable ideas of Moral Good and Evil existing in the mind. No sooner does man observe an action, than he refers it to one or other of these ideas. Speaking of the differences between men and brutes in their observation of external objects, he says:

'For the man hath certain Moral Anticipations and Signatures stamped inwardly upon his Soul, which makes him presently take notice of whatsoever symbolises with it in Corporeal Things' (as, for instance, in 'the Signatures of Morality in the Countenances of men and their Pictures'); 'but the Brute hath none.'

If this theory be true, there ought never to be the slightest difficulty in pronouncing on the moral character of an action, nor, inasmuch as the ideas of moral good and evil are common to all men and identical in all, ought there to be the slightest divergence in the moral sentiments of mankind. The fact that this is not the case, and is very far from being the case, is a sufficient refutation of Cudworth's theory.

Clarke's system, which is less simple and intelligible than that of Cudworth, may, notwithstanding some inconsistencies in his work[1], perhaps be summarily stated as follows: There exist certain eternal and immutable differences, relations, or proportions between various things, and, similarly, between various actions, persons, and circumstances; as, in the intellectual sphere, these differences constitute what is true or false, so, in the moral sphere, they constitute what is good or evil; moreover, in both spheres alike, these relations or differences are apprehended

[1] Clarke's ethical doctrines are chiefly to be found in his 'Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,' though there are also some passages bearing on these questions in the 'Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.' The two works, which were delivered in consecutive years as Boyle Lectures, are usually published in the same volume, under the title of 'Clarke on the Attributes.'

by the Reason[1], and, if it were not for the sinister influence of the Affections operating on the Will, we could no more act contrary to an acknowledged moral truth, than we could refuse to accept a mathematical demonstration.

That there are moral as well as mathematical relations, of course, admits of no doubt, but the author failed to see that any deductions from mathematical relations admit of being stated absolutely, are true under all conceivable circumstances, and are in no way dependent on the constitution of human nature, while any deductions from moral relations, if stated accurately, must be stated with numerous qualifications, are frequently true only under certain special circumstances, and, so far as we can see, would many of them have no meaning except in reference to the special constitution and circumstances of man. Thus, there are certain relations between the angles of a plane triangle, from which we deduce the conclusion that their sum is equal to two right angles. Under no circumstances can we conceive the reverse of this conclusion being true. But there is also a certain relation between a benefactor and the object of his benefit. From this relation we deduce the conclusion that the person benefitted ought to be ready to return the kindness. But surely this conclusion would not necessarily hold good at the expense of veracity or honesty or the claims of near relations or other benefactors. Moreover, it is quite possible to conceive other intelligent

[1] By the 'Reason,' Cudworth invariably means what by writers who adopt an *a priori* theory of morals is frequently called the 'intuitive' reason, but the distinction between the so-called 'intuitive' and the so-called 'discursive' reason does not appear to have occurred to Clarke, and, consequently, we are often at a loss to know whether he regards certain moral relations as being apprehended intuitively or as being arrived at by a course of ratiocination. Throughout his works, in fact, we are constantly baffled by his vague use of terms.

beings incapable of giving or receiving benefits, in which case the precept would have no meaning.

The following passage will give some idea of Clarke's position and mode of treatment:

'That there are different relations of things one towards another, is as certain as that there are different things in the world. That from these different relations of different things, there necessarily arises an agreement or disagreement of some things to others, or a fitness or unfitness of the application of different things or different relations one to another, is likewise as certain, as that there is any difference in the nature of things, or that different things do exist. Further, that there is a fitness or suitableness of certain circumstances to certain persons, and an unsuitableness of others, founded in the nature of things and the qualifications of persons, antecedent to will and to all arbitrary or positive appointment whatsoever, must unavoidably be acknowledged by every one who will not affirm that 'tis equally fit and suitable, in the nature and reason of things, that an innocent being should be extremely and eternally miserable, as that it should be free from such misery. There is therefore such a thing as fitness and unfitness, eternally, necessarily and unchangeably, in the nature and reason of things. Now what these relations of things absolutely and necessarily are in themselves, that also they appear to be, to the understanding of all intelligent beings, except those only, who understand things to be what they are not, that is, whose understandings are either very imperfect or very much depraved. And by this understanding or knowledge of the natural and necessary relations of things, the actions likewise of all intelligent beings are constantly directed (which by the by is the true ground and foundation of all morality), unless their

will be corrupted by particular interest or affection, or swayed by some unreasonable and prevailing lust[1].'

This theory respecting the grounds of moral distinctions supplies Clarke with an apparently easy method of determining the various duties of man—a method which is highly commended by Butler in the introduction to his Sermons, though never actually adopted by him in practice[2]. This method Clarke himself applies to the construction of the main branches of duty (duties to God, &c.); remarking that all the more special duties may easily be derived from these.

God is all-powerful; he possesses all moral attributes in perfection; we are weak and frail and impotent to do good by our own unaided strength. God is moreover our Creator—we are his creatures. This is the relation in which we stand to God, and from this relation, which is as plain and unmistakeable to every unprejudiced mind as the relations of numbers or geometrical figures to each other, our duties to God may easily be deduced.

It is our duty to honour and obey him who possesses all power and authority: to love him who has given us life and every good thing that we enjoy: to trust in him who is unchangeably true, and to offer praise and thanks-

[1] On the Being and Attributes of God, Prop. xii.

[2] 'There are two ways in which the subject of morals may be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things: the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is which is correspondent to this whole nature. In the former method the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reason of things: in the latter, that it is a violation or throwing in upon our own nature. Thus they both lead us to the same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue; and thus they exceedingly strengthen and enforce each other. The first seems the most direct formal proof, and in some respects the least liable to cavil and dispute: the latter is in a particular manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind; and is more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances in life.' Preface to Butler's Sermons.

giving to him who protects us by his providence. These duties are as plain and conspicuous as the shining of the sun at noon, and it is the greatest folly and perversity to disregard a duty which arises necessarily from the relation of the Creator to his creatures. It is the very same folly as to deny that a whole is greater than its parts, or that an effect is independent of its cause. As the natures of things and their consequent relations determine what is right and fit for man to do, i. e. the rule of right, they supply also an obligation of the most direct and formal character to the practice of it. The original obligation of all is, he says, the eternal reason of things.

This obligation is absolute, and would be complete in the absence of all others. It constitutes what is called moral obligation in the strict sense of the word, all other obligations having a secondary and subsidiary authority, and being necessary only to confirm and enforce the primary one. It is through the understanding that these abstract relations of things act upon the will. They force the assent of the understanding, and this bare intellectual assent, without the aid of any feeling, interest, or prospective pleasure, should be sufficient to determine the will in all intelligent natures. For the will to refuse obedience to the understanding is the very same absurdity or perversity as for the understanding to refuse to recognise abstract truth when placed before it. Vice and folly are the same things, and both indicate defective intelligence. The reasons of things are the sole source of action in intelligent beings.

God himself, though free to act as he pleases, does nothing of mere will or arbitrariness. He obliges himself in his government of the world to respect the order he has made. The natures and relations of things exercise over his will a kind of moral compulsion or necessity (i. e.

an influence as certain and constant as if they exercised an absolute necessity), and would influence our will in the same manner, were we not swayed by arbitrary humours and irregular passions, by private interest or present or prospective pleasures.

The most conspicuous defect in writers of this class generally is the absence of an historical treatment of the subject. No attempt is made to trace the growth and history of moral ideas, or to compare one stage of moral progress with another. Most of the peculiarities of their mode of viewing the subject are traceable to the same cause; namely, the neglect of the inductive method generally, and particularly of the comparative and historical branch of it. Moral distinctions which seemed obvious and even necessary to them and to their contemporaries are not unnaturally regarded by some of them as good in themselves, and calculated to command the assent of all reasonable beings at all times and under all circumstances, and only failing to do so by reason of negligence or perversity in individuals or in whole generations of mankind; while by others they were regarded as a necessary part of the endowments of *reason* as such. Hence, too, the abstract method of treatment which distinguishes the works of these writers. They have no sound theory of the feelings or emotional element in human nature, and therefore fail to discover its influence both on our moral judgments and on the will. To refer morality to feeling, whether in the case of ourselves or others, is with them to make it relative and human, a mere arbitrary thing dependent on an implanted bias—on the particular and accidental structure of humanity; necessary it may be for man, but not for all intelligent existence, i. e. intelligence as such. By referring it to reason only—reason unbiassed by affection, pure reason, impersonal reason, universal

reason—they seek to give it an absolute authority, and to make it valid alike for man and all intelligent creatures, however differently constituted in other respects. Morality on this view, it is thought, raises man above himself, his own nature and constitution, and brings him into relation with another world and a higher order of beings, in whom reason alone is both a law and motive of action.

They have, doubtless, been led to these results by their unwillingness to place morality on any *a posteriori* basis; and hence they have themselves been led to place it on a foundation extremely insecure. They have fallen back on metaphysical or transcendental theories, current perhaps at the moment, but incapable of retaining a permanent hold on the minds of men, especially in a scientific age. The *feeling* indeed which some of these writers have shown for morality, though exaggerated and vaguely expressed, is extremely interesting, and will always give their writings a certain value. But still, after all, their theory is metaphysical and unscientific. The eternal differences of things, the universal reason, the intelligible world, &c., are causes or explanations which admit of no verification, and which, therefore, leave morality without any solid foundation or justification. Theories of this kind have, it is true, had a temporary value, as a protest against the primitive and imperfect conclusions of more scientific methods, and, consequently, as driving men back to a re-examination of crude and partial hypotheses. Historically they are no doubt interesting, but they have no permanent or scientific importance.

HUTCHESON.

A system of a totally different kind was opposed to the speculations of Hobbes by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.

What has been called the Rational School maintained that morality is founded in the intuitions or deductions of Reason. What is called the Moral-Sense School maintains, on the other hand, that moral and immoral acts are discriminated by a special sense, 'implanted' in us for this purpose. Shaftesbury, though a far more graceful and interesting writer, is inferior to Hutcheson both in comprehension of his subject and in definiteness of statement. It will be sufficient, therefore, if we sketch briefly the leading principles of the latter writer.

Hobbes had maintained that all our actions have their ultimate source in self-love. In opposition to this it is maintained by Hutcheson that many of our actions spring solely from a regard to others, and that, in fact, this is the case with all those of which, on reflection, we approve. The only quality, either in our own actions or in those of others, which commends itself to our approbation is their benevolence or unselfishness.

'If,' says he, in the Enquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil[1], 'we examine all the actions which are counted amiable anywhere, and enquire into the grounds upon which they are approved, we shall find, that in the opinion of the person who approves them, they always appear as benevolent, or flowing from love of others, and a study of their happiness, whether the approver be one of the persons beloved, or profited, or not; so that all those kind affections which incline us to make others happy, and all actions supposed to flow from such affections, appear morally good, if while they are benevolent toward some persons, they be not pernicious to others. Nor shall we find any thing amiable in any action whatsoever, where there is no benevolence imagined; nor in any disposition, or capacity, which is not supposed

[1] Sect. 3. ad init.

applicable to, and designed for benevolent purposes. Nay, as was before observed, the actions which in fact are exceedingly useful, shall appear void of moral beauty, if we know they proceeded from no kind intentions toward others; and yet an unsuccessful attempt of kindness, or of promoting public good, shall appear as amiable as the most successful, if it flowed from as strong benevolence.'

Consistently with this view, we are told, somewhat further on in the same section, that 'Actions which flow solely from Self-Love, and yet evidence no want of Benevolence, having no hurtful effects upon others, seem perfectly indifferent in a moral sense, and neither raise the Love or Hatred of the observer[1].'

This quality in actions and states of mind is approved immediately by a special sense, called by Hutcheson, appropriating what is apparently a casual expression in Shaftesbury, the 'Moral Sense[2].'

The nature of this 'Sense' will be apparent from the following passages, which might be multiplied almost indefinitely:

'His' (the Author's) 'principal design is to shew, "That human nature was not left quite indifferent in the affair of virtue, to form to itself observations concerning the advantage or disadvantage of actions, and accordingly to regulate its conduct." The weakness of our reason, and the avocations arising from the infirmity and necessities of our nature, are so great, that very few men could ever

[1] There are one or two passages in Hutcheson's works, where he acknowledges that a man may justly regard himself as a part of the rational system, and may thus 'be, in part, an object of his own benevolence.' These, however, hardly affect the statement of his general theory.

[2] Shaftesbury uses this expression not in the margin alone, as Dr. Whewell seems to intimate, but once also in the text: 'For notwithstanding a man may through custom, or by licentiousness of practice, favoured by atheism, come in time to lose much of his natural moral sense; yet,' &c. Enquiry concerning Virtue, bk. i. part 3, § 2.

have formed those long deductions of reason, which shew some actions to be in the whole advantageous to the agent, and their contraries pernicious. The author of nature has much better furnished us for a virtuous conduct, than our moralists seem to imagine, by almost as quick and powerful instructions as we have for the preservation of our bodies. He has made Virtue a lovely form, to excite our pursuit of it; and has given us strong affections to be the springs of each virtuous action[1].'

'The other opinion' (speaking of his own, in opposition to that of Hobbes) 'is this, "That we have not only self-love, but benevolent affections also towards others, in various degrees, making us desire their happiness as an ultimate end, without any view to private happiness: that we have a moral sense or determination of our mind, to approve every kind affection either in ourselves or others, and all publicly useful actions which we imagine flow from such affection, without our having a view to our private happiness, in our approbation of these actions[2]."'

In the Introduction to the Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, he proposes for proof the following thesis[3]:

'That some actions have to men an *immediate Goodness;* or that by a *superior Sense*, which I call a *Moral one*, we *approve* the actions of others, and perceive them to be their Perfection and Dignity, and are determined to love the Agent; a like Perception we have in reflecting on such actions of our own, without any view of natural advantage from them.'

This author's theory, then, contains two main positions,

[1] Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, in Two Treatises. Introduction.

[2] Illustrations upon the Moral Sense. Introduction.

[3] This statement is taken from the fifth edition. In some of the earlier editions it is stated less fully.

both of them probably suggested, in the first instance, by his antagonism to Hobbes, but the latter bringing him into more direct conflict with the School of Cudworth and Clarke than with any direct statements to be found in Hobbes' writings. The first of these positions is, as we have seen, that, so far from man being a purely selfish being, the only actions which merit or receive moral approbation are those which aim at the good of others. Amiable as this theory is, it is almost as gross an exaggeration as that of Hobbes. Surely Temperance, Cleanliness, Prudence, Self-Respect are as much, and as justly, objects of approbation as Kindliness, Beneficence, and Mercy. The existence and welfare of society are as much dependent on the one set of qualities as on the other. And, as a matter of fact, we find that they are equally acknowledged to be so.

Hutcheson's second position will be abundantly discussed in the sequel of this work. It will be sufficient here to state that we regard the expression 'Sense' as misleading, both by suggesting an *immediateness* in the approving process, which is not, and certainly ought not to be, invariably found in it, and by tending to keep out of sight the supreme necessity of educating the moral faculty, and, from time to time, of reviewing its decisions. In both these respects, there occur isolated passages in Hutcheson's writings, guarding against misconception, but these passages are rare, and there can be little doubt that a careless reader might carry away the impression that the author supposed him to have been furnished by nature, once for all, with an immediate and infallible arbiter on questions of right and wrong. Moreover, we should demur to the *special* character ascribed to this 'Sense' or faculty, for, as we shall hereafter endeavour to shew, its decisions seem to arise necessarily, though

often by a complicated and circuitous route, out of the operations of the reason and the gratification or disappointment of the sympathetic and self-regarding feelings. A faculty, the growth of which can be explained and verified, ought not to be assumed to be a separate 'Sense.' But, with this author, the multiplication of special senses seems to be alike unlimited and arbitrary.

Before closing this brief account of Hutcheson, it should be noticed that, on one point of prime importance, both he and Shaftesbury, though somewhat obscurely and with considerable inconsistencies in detail, and probably without themselves fully seeing the importance of their position, anticipated a doctrine which was afterwards so clearly and emphatically propounded by Hume. This point is the Moral Standard or Criterion of Right and Wrong. Superficial readers often imagine that, with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, this standard is the Moral Sense. The Moral Sense, however, is only the judging faculty; the standard or criterion by which it judges is the tendency of actions to promote the public good.

'Having once,' says Shaftesbury[1], 'the Good of our Species or Public in view, as our end or aim, 'tis impossible we should be misguided by any means to a false Apprehension or Sense of Right or Wrong.'

'That we may see,' says Hutcheson[2], 'how love, or benevolence, is the foundation of all apprehended excellence in social virtues, let us only observe, That amidst the diversity of sentiments on this head among various sects, this is still allowed to be the way of deciding the controversy about any disputed practice, viz. to enquire whether this conduct, or the contrary, will most effectually promote the public good. The morality is immediately adjusted, when

[1] Enquiry concerning Virtue, Bk. i. Part 3. § 2.

[2] Enquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, sect. 3.

the natural tendency, or influence of the action upon the universal natural good of mankind is agreed upon. That which produces more good than evil in the whole, is acknowledged good; and what does not, is counted evil. In this case, we no other way regard the good of the actor, or that of those who are thus enquiring, than as they make a part of the great system. In our late debates about passive obedience, and the right of resistance in defence of privileges, the point disputed among men of sense was, "whether universal submission would probably be attended with greater natural evils, than temporary insurrections, when privileges are invaded; and not, whether what tended in the whole to the public natural good was also morally good?"'

And, subseqently in the same section, he sums up an enquiry as to what constitutes the moral qualities of actions, in language almost precisely identical with that employed in the earlier works of Bentham:—'That action is best, which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers; and that worst, which, in like manner, occasions misery.'

Another important point in Moral Theory which is justly estimated by Hutcheson, and for which he has earned the special commendation of Adam Smith[1], is the relation of the Reason to the Affections, though it is not so much in his account of Moral Approbation, as might be gathered from the words of Adam Smith, as in his account of Moral Action, that this relation is insisted on. Ethical writers would have been spared much needless controversy, if they had seen clearly that

[1] 'Dr. Hutcheson had the merit of being the first who distinguished, with any degree of precision, in what respect all moral distinctions may be said to arise from reason, and in what respect they are founded upon immediate sense and feeling.' Adam Smith's Moral Sentiments, Part vii. sect. 3. ch. 2.

reason never excites to action; that reason may devise means, but that it is always some desire or affection which prompts to ends. This is well and frequently stated by Hutcheson: 'Men have Reason given them to judge of the tendencies of their actions, that they may not stupidly follow the first appearance of public good; but it is still some appearance of Good which they pursue[1].' And, again, in the first section of the 'Illustrations upon the Moral Sense,' where he treats expressly of this subject, he says pointedly: 'Though we have instincts determining us to desire ends, without supposing any previous reasoning; yet it is by use of our reason that we find out the means of obtaining our ends.' Even in his account of the mental process succeeding action, or the act of moral approbation, though his theory of the Moral Sense leads him to dwell almost exclusively on the emotional side of the process, he seems by no means unconscious that it has a rational side as well. The following brief sentence might be taken as a summary of his more matured speculations on this head: 'Now we shall find that all exciting reasons pre-suppose instincts and affections; and the justifying pre-suppose a moral sense[2].'

The writings of Hutcheson are specially interesting in relation to the authors who succeeded him. Price stands in direct, and Butler in partial[3], antagonism to him. On the other hand, it is plain that Hume's speculations were based, to a very considerable extent, on those of Hutcheson, which consequently, through Hume, must have exerted an influence on Bentham and the so-called Utilitarian School.

[1] Enquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, sect. 4.

[2] Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, sect. 1.

[3] See especially Butler's Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue.

BUTLER.

Like the other writers whom we have noticed, Butler assumes that the science of morals has an existence independent of theology[1], and, like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, finds the ultimate ground of moral distinctions in the make or constitution of human nature itself. The Conscience he invariably regards as supplying a complete moral obligation, quite apart from the religious sanction. Moreover, the religious affections are, with him, simply the moral affections directed to an adequate, instead of an inadequate, and a supreme, instead of a subordinate, object. 'Religion,' he says in the Sermon on the Love of God, 'does not demand new affections, but only claims the direction of those you already have, those affections you daily feel; though unhappily confined to objects, not altogether unsuitable, but altogether unequal to them. We only represent to you the higher, the adequate objects of those very faculties and affections.'

The various places in which Butler delineates the constitution of human nature are by no means consistent with each other, but the theory which seems most accu-

[1] In a note to Part i. ch. 6 of the Analogy, there is a passage which is important as stating definitely and distinctly what in the Sermons, where he treats especially of moral questions, is implied throughout. 'However, I am far from intending to deny, that the will of God is determined by what is fit, by the right and reason of the case; though one chooses to decline matters of such abstract speculation, and to speak with caution when one does speak of them. But if it be intelligible to say, that it is fit and reasonable for every one to consult his own happiness, then, fitness of action, or the right and reason of the case, is an intelligible manner of speaking. And it seems as inconceivable, to suppose God to approve one course of action, or one end, preferably to another, which yet His acting at all from design implies that he does, without supposing somewhat *prior* in that end to be the ground of the preference; as to suppose him to discern an abstract proposition to be true, without supposing somewhat prior in it to be the ground of the discernment.'

rately to represent his views may be described as follows. We have, 1st, several particular appetites, passions, and affections, each having its appropriate object[1]; 2nd, the general principles of benevolence and rational self-love, having for their objects respectively the good of others and the good of ourselves; 3rd, at the head of this hierarchy, the principle of conscience or reflection, which is 'in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so.' What is most distinctive of this theory is the conception of the nature and office of conscience. Its office is supreme. Moreover, it depends for its credentials on no other part of human nature. It carries its own authority with it. 'You cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself; and to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world[2].' 'Your obligation to obey this law, is its being the law of your nature. That your conscience approves of and attests to such a course of action, is itself alone an obligation[3].' Again, it acts immediately, and is, apparently, an equally trustworthy guide in all men. 'Let any plain, honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself, Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt but that this

[1] Thus, in the 11th Sermon, he says: 'Every man hath a general desire of his own happiness; and likewise a variety of particular affections, passions, and appetites to particular external objects. . . . The principle we call self-love never seeks anything external for the sake of the thing, but only as a means of happiness or good: particular affections rest in the external things themselves.'

[2] Sermon ii. Sermon iii

question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue, by almost any fair man in almost any circumstance[1].' Lastly, this principle admits of no analysis, or, at all events, Butler does not care to analyse it. It may be called 'conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason;' it may be 'considered as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both[2].' Most frequently the synonym employed for Conscience is Reflection.

Of this theory it may be remarked, in the first place, that, while it is essentially opposed to the theory of Hobbes, it results from the application of the same method, namely, that of self-introspection. In this respect, as well as in the place which it assigns to the affections, the opposition offered to Hobbes by Butler differs diametrically from that offered by Cudworth and Clarke. Butler meets Hobbes on his own ground. He does not call in question his mode of procedure but he disputes the special observations which he makes and the special inferences which he draws. The elements of Human Nature which Hobbes confounds, Butler distinguishes, and, consequently, he is able to account for certain ethical phenomena in a far more direct and natural manner than is his antagonist.

It may be remarked, secondly, that Conscience, as understood by Butler, is not the enlightened and educated conscience of the man who has reflected on the grounds and consequences of human actions, but the untutored conscience of any ordinary unreflecting person, in fact of the 'plain, honest man.' That the conscience admits of education, and that the uneducated conscience is a very inadequate guide, are considerations of which Butler takes no heed. This defect is undoubtedly due to the fact that he attempts no analysis of the faculty to which he assigns

[1] Sermon iii. [2] Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue.

such supreme importance. He fails to see that, in the case of ordinary men, the conscience is simply the aggregate of those moral ideas and feelings which have been derived partly from personal experience, partly from the accumulated experience of mankind, transmitted from age to age, and impressed on the individual by the various influences which together constitute his education—by example, by parental authority, by the influence, direct and indirect, of his family, his friends, society, law, by literature and by religious instruction and discipline. It is the conscientious feeling of one who has never asked himself how the rules of conduct he has been taught to respect and venerate have sprung up, who has never attempted to enquire into their reasons, or to trace their growth, history, and variations. The feeling can give no account or justification of itself. For this it must fall back on the higher philosophical intelligence, which is as necessary, in the last resort, to determine what is right and good as it is to determine what is true. The decisions of Reason are often out of harmony with those of Conscience, as it exists in its unenlightened form, but, by amalgamating with them and correcting them, they constitute the enlightened conscience of the man who acts from reflection as well as feeling.

But, though Conscience is not absolute in its moral judgments, as Butler and others appear to represent it, it is of the utmost importance for the practical purposes of life that its authority should not be too much questioned or weakened. On most occasions we have no time to test the dictates of conscience, and on these occasions our only course is to obey without scruple. The impulses of passion should never be allowed to overpower the voice of conscience, but, though in the moment of action we ought always to listen to conscience, the

conscience to which we listen should be one which has been previously examined, corrected, and enlightened.

The opposition which was encountered by some of the earlier attempts to analyse conscience was doubtless due to the idea that by robbing it of its mystery they weakened its authority. Most of the analysts had themselves to blame for this belief. The language they used was calculated to convey the impression that their own sensibility on the subject of morals was somewhat impaired by the explanation they were able to give of them. The moral feeling they express, though more distinct and definite, is less exalted than that of their adversaries, and in some cases they give grounds for the belief that they intended to place moral obligation on a lower foundation than that which is assigned to it either in popular language or by the majority of moralists.

A third remark which may be made on the system of Butler is that it confines itself to self-introspection, that is, to the observation of the individual nature. It makes no attempt to compare human nature under a variety of circumstances, in different times and nations, in different stages of individual or national development, and the like. It appears to take for granted that human nature is always alike, and, as it notes no ethical varieties, it of course can make no attempt to account for them, to trace the laws, assign the causes, and define the limits of variation. Hence it is that in the speculations of Butler we find no mention of any external standard or criterion. As he recognises no variety in the moral feelings, he feels no need of a test by which to discriminate between them.

Connected, moreover, with this assumption of the identity of the moral nature in all men is Butler's application of the theory of final causes to morals. It is constantly

assumed, as, for instance, in the Sermons on Resentment and Compassion, that our various affections were implanted in us by God, just as they are, that they have had no history, no growth, and have undergone no adaptations to the wants and external surroundings of man. It is this purely statical view, this absence of the idea of growth, which in fact accounts for most of the errors or deficiencies in Butler's treatment of Ethics.

HUME.

These defects in the method of Butler are no longer apparent in the speculations of Hume, whose 'Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals' was published within a few years of Butler's Sermons. Hume's method, like Butler's, is wholly inductive, but, instead of appealing solely to self-introspection, it is based on the observation and comparison of various types of character and sentiment, collected from the different ages and countries of the world, as well as on the registration of individual experiences. His tendency, in fact, is rather to exaggerate the variation of moral sentiments, than to overlook it. Given a wide diversity of moral opinion and feeling, the problem with him is to discover what circumstances are common to those qualities and actions which men praise or blame. There is, he conceives, only one circumstance common to the objects of our approbation, namely, the fact that they are regarded as being either useful or agreeable either to ourselves or others, and, similarly, to the objects of our disapprobation there is only one circumstance common, namely, the fact that they are regarded as having a contrary tendency. A little reflection will shew that Hume's formula, if true, admits

of a much more simple expression. The agreeable is that which affords immediate pleasure. The useful is that which, in its ultimate results, either diminishes pain or adds to the stock of pleasures. The one circumstance, therefore, which merits approbation, might be described as that which is regarded as conducing to the happiness either of ourselves or of others. Hume passes in review the various virtues, or qualities which are esteemed amongst mankind, and shews that, in every instance, it is this circumstance which elicits our approbation.

The process itself of moral approbation is, in its main outlines, analysed by Hume in a manner which leaves little to be desired. After reviewing the various arguments which have been adduced for identifying this act with an act of reasoning, on the one hand, or an act of feeling, on the other, he proceeds:

'These arguments on each side (and many more might be produced) are so plausible, that I am apt to suspect, they may, the one as well as the other, be solid and satisfactory, and that reason and sentiment concur in almost all moral determinations and conclusions. The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters and actions amiable or odious, praiseworthy or blameable; that which stamps on them the mark of honour or infamy, approbation or censure; that which renders morality an active principle, and constitutes virtue our happiness, and vice our misery: it is probable, I say, that this final sentence depends on some internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species. For what else can have an influence of this nature? But in order to pave the way for such a sentiment, and give a proper discernment of its object, it is often necessary, we find, that much reasoning should precede, that nice distinctions be made, just conclusions drawn, distant comparisons formed, compli-

cated relations examined, and general facts fixed and ascertained[1].'

It might, at first sight, be supposed that the 'internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species' is no other than the 'Moral Sense' of Hutcheson, but in the first Appendix, in which the subject is still further pursued, there is a passage which seems to identify it with Sympathy:

'But though reason, when fully assisted and improved, be sufficient to instruct us in the pernicious or useful tendency of qualities and actions; it is not alone sufficient to produce any moral blame or approbation. Utility is only a tendency to a certain end; and were the end totally indifferent to us, we should feel the same indifference towards the means. It is requisite a sentiment should here display itself, in order to give a preference to the useful above the pernicious tendencies. This sentiment can be no other than a feeling for the happiness of mankind, and a resentment of their misery; since these are the different ends which virtue and vice have a tendency to promote. Here, therefore, reason instructs us in the several tendencies of actions, and humanity makes a distinction in favour of those which are useful and beneficial[2].'

We say 'seems to identify it with Sympathy,' for it is not quite certain whether the process here alluded to is that which precedes or that which succeeds action, nor, granting that it is the latter, is it clear that the word *humanity* may not include a regard to our own interests as well as to those of others. If Hume really considered the internal sense which pronounces a final decision upon our actions to be no other, in the last analysis, than sympathy or self-regard, or, more precisely, the pleasures and pains which attend the satisfaction or disappointment

[1] Enquiry, &c., section i.

[2] Enquiry, &c., Appendix i.

of those feelings, his theory, to some extent, resembles that which, when we come to treat of the approving or disapproving principle, we shall ourselves see reason to adopt.

But though, in its main outline, so far, at least, as regards the respective provinces assigned to reason and emotion, Hume's theory of moral approbation is correct, we may note in his treatment of this subject two considerable defects: 1st, his failure to draw attention to the extreme complexity of the process both on its intellectual and on its emotional side; 2nd, his neglect, which, perhaps, after all, is apparent rather than real, to insist on the authoritativeness and finality of the decisions of the approving faculty, when once formed. In both these respects, the study of Hartley, when treating of the same subject, is an useful complement to that of Hume. This author, while insisting almost as emphatically as Butler on the venerable and authoritative character of Conscience, regards it as by no means an ultimate fact in our constitution; it is, with him, the joint product of many different forces, all operating through the subtle laws of association.

It may be remarked that Hume appears studiously to avoid the employment of the term 'Conscience.' A moralist who does this is certain to cause much embarrassment to the great mass of his readers, for, even though the main elements of Conscience may be duly specified and discriminated, as they undoubtedly are in Hume's Essay, the suppression of a term, around which there cluster so many venerable associations, can hardly fail to create in most minds a suspicion that the principle itself is treated with disrespect.

Notwithstanding, however, these defects, many of which may be explained by the peculiar circumstances under

which Hume wrote, it is hardly possible to exaggerate the debt of Moral Philosophy to this writer. He marks the close of its earlier, and the beginning of its later period. He reduced to order and symmetry all the elements of moral theory existing in his time, and alike in his conception of method, in his attempt to ascertain the true nature of the moral standard or criterion of right and wrong, in the place and importance which he assigns to the moral standard, and in his analysis of the act of moral approbation, he appears to have made decided and important advances on the writers who preceded him.

ADAM SMITH.

Of the system of Adam Smith, though, at the time, it acquired great celebrity, it is not necessary to speak at any length. The key-note of his ethical philosophy is the word 'Sympathy.' When we approve of the actions of another man, it is because we enter into the feelings from which they proceeded, or, in other words, sympathise with the agent. When we approve of our own actions, it is because, when we place ourselves in the position of an impartial spectator, we can, from his point of view, sympathise with the motives which dictated our conduct.

'We either approve or disapprove of the conduct of another man, according as we feel that, when we bring his case home to ourselves, we either can or cannot entirely sympathise with the sentiments and motives which directed it. And, in the same manner, we either approve or disapprove of our own conduct, according as we feel that, when we place ourselves in the situation of another man, and view it, as it were, with his eyes and from his station, we

either can or cannot entirely enter into and sympathise with the sentiments and motives which influenced it[1].'

As to the qualities in actions which elicit our approbation or disapprobation, they consist in what he calls the propriety or impropriety, the merit or demerit of the action.

'The sentiment or affection of the heart, from which any action proceeds, and upon which its whole virtue or vice must ultimately depend, may be considered under two different aspects, or in two different relations; first, in relation to the cause which excites it, or the motive which gives occasion to it; and, secondly, in relation to the end which it proposes, or the effect which it tends to produce. In the suitableness or unsuitableness, in the proportion or disproportion, which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it, consists the propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness, of the consequent action. In the beneficial or hurtful nature of the effects which the affection aims at, or tends to produce, consists the merit or demerit of the action, the qualities by which it is entitled to reward, or is deserving of punishment[2].'

It does not appear to have occurred to the author that the 'propriety' and 'merit' of an action are in reality identical. How are we to determine the 'suitableness' or 'proportion' 'which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it' except by some external signs, and what external signs are there on which we can place any reliance except 'the effects which the affection aims at'? But it is 'the beneficial or hurtful nature' of these effects which constitutes 'the merit or demerit of the action.' Hence 'propriety' and 'merit,' as tests or criteria of action, coincide.

These are the main peculiarities of Adam Smith's

[1] Moral Sentiments, Pt. iii. ch. 1.
[2] Ib. Pt. i. Sect. i. ch. 3.

ethical philosophy. In many respects it bears a close affinity to the system of Hutcheson, of whom he always speaks with respect, and who appears to have exerted more influence upon him than any of his other predecessors.

PRICE.

Having now traced the history of speculations on Morals through the succession of English writers who vindicated the sympathetic side of Human Nature, we may return to the later representatives of the theories originated by Cudworth and Clarke. For our purpose, it will be sufficient if, under this head, we include Price and Kant, the latter author being included in a review of the English moralists for reasons already stated.

Richard Price, an eminent non-conformist minister, published a 'Review of the Principal Questions in Morals' in 1757[1]. This work is professedly directed against the theories of Hutcheson, but the treatment, as a whole, is constructive rather than polemical. Price's views approximate more closely to those of Cudworth than to those of any other English moralist, but they are mainly interesting, in the History of Morals, on account of their resemblance to the theories subsequently propounded by Kant.

The main positions of Price's treatise are three, which may be stated as follows. First, actions are *in themselves* right or wrong. Secondly, Right and Wrong are simple ideas incapable of analysis. Thirdly, these ideas are perceived immediately by the intuitive power of the Reason or Understanding, terms which he employs indifferently.

[1] The third edition of this work, which expresses the author's 'latest and maturest thoughts,' was published in 1787.

To the first of these positions it is not, at first sight, easy to attach any precise meaning, nor does even a careful perusal of the work altogether remove the ambiguity. The most natural interpretation, perhaps, of the expression that 'an action is right in itself' is that it is right without any relation to the nature of the agent, the end aimed at, or the circumstances under which it is performed. And, if this were the meaning, the objections would be obvious. For, in the first place, it might be said that it is impossible to regard anything strictly *in itself*, that all knowledge is a knowledge of relations, and that the very expression 'action in itself' implies a contradiction in terms, for an action must at least be related to the agent from whom it proceeds and the patient who is the object of it. And, again, it might be said, with equal truth, that the moral character of an action may be entirely different according to the circumstances under which it takes place. A murder and the execution of the murderer are, when stripped of certain circumstances, precisely the same act, namely, the taking away of human life, but the one is a crime of the utmost enormity, while the other is commonly regarded as a laudable action.

But, notwithstanding the fact that many passages in the work seem to be fairly open to this criticism, there are others which would tend to shew that Price cannot have attached to the expression 'right in itself' the meaning which seems to be the obvious and natural one. Such are the following:

'The meaning and design of these expressions will appear after considering that, all actions being necessarily right, indifferent, or wrong, what determines which of these an action should be accounted is the truth of the case; or the relations and circumstances of the agent and the objects. In certain relations there is a certain conduct

right. There are certain manners of behaviour which we unavoidably approve, as soon as these relations are known. Change the relations, and a different manner of behaviour becomes right. Nothing is clearer than that what is due or undue, proper or improper to be done, must vary according to the different natures and circumstances of beings. If a particular treatment of one nature is right; it is impossible that the same treatment of a different nature, or of all natures, should be right[1].'

'Abstract virtue is, most properly, a quality of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, considered independently of the sense of the agent; or what, in itself and absolutely, it is right such an agent, in such circumstances, should do; and what, if he judged truly, he would judge he ought to do[2].'

What, then, does he mean by the phrase that 'an action is right or wrong *in itself*'? Excluding the meaning which we have set aside, he may wish to express either that actions are right or wrong irrespectively of their consequences, or that the same action would appear right or wrong not to man only but to all intelligent beings, or, as we believe to be the case, he may sometimes wish to express one of these meanings and sometimes the other. Thus, in one place, he says:

'But, why right? Not merely on account of the effects (which, in these instances, we are far from taking time always to consider), but immediately and ultimately right; and for the same reason that beneficence is right, and that objects and relations, in general, are what they are[3].'

And, again, he speaks of right as denoting 'a real character of actions, or something true of them; something necessary and immutable and independent of our

[1] Ch. 6. [2] Ch. 8. [3] Ch. 4.

perceptions, like equality, difference, proportion, or connexion[1].'

Without here attempting any elaborate criticism of these views, it may be said of the first that it is practically impossible, in forming a judgment on an action, to avoid altogether having some regard to its consequences, or, at least, to the consequences which would result from such actions, as a class, on the supposition of their being common; thus, in estimating the moral character of mendacity and veracity, we cannot put out of sight the consequences which would result to society were one or other of these habits general in a community. And of the second view, it may be said that it is, at least, extremely rash to pronounce dogmatically on the nature of other intelligences of whose thoughts and feelings we have had, and can have had, no experience. But, even supposing that there exist other intelligences having much the same mental capacities as ourselves; still, if the circumstances in which they are placed are different, the course of action which befits them will be different as well.

It will be seen, then, that we regard the doctrine that 'actions are right or wrong in themselves' as not only ambiguous and difficult to define with precision, but as containing no meaning of any real value in the establishment of ethical theory.

The second and third positions, that Right and Wrong are simple ideas incapable of analysis, and that they are perceived by an intuitive act of the Reason, are succinctly stated in the following passage:

''Tis a very necessary previous observation, that our ideas of right and wrong are simple ideas, and must therefore be ascribed to some power of immediate perception in the human mind. He that doubts this, need

[1] Ch. 10.

only try to give definitions of them, which shall amount to more than synonymous expressions[1].'

In another place he says:

'With the same view I must add, that when virtue is said to consist in conformity to the relations of persons and things; this must not be considered as a definition of virtue, or as intended to assign a reason justifying the practice of it. Nothing can be gained by such forms of expression, when used with these intentions: and, if we will consider why it is right to conform ourselves to the relations in which persons and objects stand to us; we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views in a simple perception, and something ultimately approved for which no justifying reason can be assigned[2].'

In these and similar passages, the question in dispute between the two rival schools of moralists is brought to a definite issue. Does the term Right admit of any explanation, definition, or analysis, or is it simply inexplicable? The great majority of moralists have adopted the former alternative, and have endeavoured to explain the idea of Right in subordination to that of Good. Any course of action which has, on the whole, a tendency to promote the happiness or to alleviate the misery of mankind, they denominate as right, and any course of action which has a contrary tendency, they denominate as wrong[3]. Price, on the other hand, maintains that, when we say that an action is right, we can give no further account of it, that we state an ultimate fact which neither requires nor can receive any further explanation.

[1] Ch. 1. sect. 3. [2] Ch. 6.

[3] Price himself seems sometimes to fall into this way of speaking, as, for instance, in the following passage: 'When we contemplate the happiness of a species, or of a world, and pronounce concerning the actions of reasonable beings which promote it, that they are right; is this judging erroneously?' Ch. 1. sect. 3.

Without insisting on the etymology of the word, which plainly connects it with some point or goal to which it connotes the shortest or *straightest* road, it will be enough to state here, what we shall have abundant opportunities of enforcing and exemplifying hereafter, that, if our ideas of right and wrong admitted of no reference to any further standard, it would be impossible to settle any disputed question in practical ethics or to make any advance in moral theory.

The connexion of the third with the first and second positions is obvious. Right and Wrong, being simple ideas, and being, moreover, qualities of actions, considered in themselves, are regarded by Price as being perceived immediately by the Reason, just in the same way that colour is perceived by the eye or sound by the ear. That they are perceived immediately follows from the fact that they are simple ideas, incapable of analysis; that they are perceived by the Reason or Understanding, and not by a sense, is maintained in an elaborate course of argument against Hutcheson. In opposition to this theory, we shall maintain that it is by an act of comparison, often of the most elaborate character, that is to say, by an act of the discursive, and not the so-called intuitive, reason, that we determine the *class* to which an action belongs, and that, when the class is once determined, the action immediately excites an emotion, that is to say, becomes an object of pursuit or avoidance, of approbation or disapprobation.

The Reason or Understanding, it is maintained, when it has apprehended the idea of Right, ought to impose that idea, as a law, upon the Will, and thus it becomes, equally with the affections, a spring of action.

The place of the emotional part of our nature in this system is not very clear. The predominant view, how-

ever, appears to be that, while it is the source of all vicious action, it may, when enlightened by reason, aid in the determination of virtuous conduct. The author fails to see that the emotions are, in the last analysis, the original source of all conduct, be it virtuous or vicious.

In one chapter, entitled 'Of the Origin of our Desires and Affections[1],' Price propounds a very peculiar view of the origin of some of our emotions, namely, that they are capable of being wholly generated by the action of the intelligence.

'To the preference and desire of private happiness by all beings, nothing more is requisite than to know what it is.—"And may not this be true, likewise, of public happiness? May not benevolence be essential to intelligent beings, as well as self-love to sensible beings?"'

At the same time, he acknowledges that 'Rational and dispassionate benevolence would, in us, be a principle much too weak, and utterly insufficient for the purposes of our present state.'

Corresponding to this supposed difference of origin in the emotions, he proposes a difference of nomenclature:

'And this, perhaps, will afford us a good reason for distinguishing between affections and passions. The former, which we apply indiscriminately to all reasonable beings, may most properly signify the desires founded in the reasonable nature itself, and essential to it; such as self-love, benevolence, and the love of truth. These, when strengthened by instinctive determinations, take the latter denomination; or are, properly, passions. Those tendencies within us that are merely instinctive, such as hunger, thirst, &c., we commonly call appetites or passions indifferently, but seldom or never affections.'

As already stated, the English author with whom Price

[1] Ch. 3.

has most affinity is Cudworth. The main point of difference is that, while Cudworth regards the ideas of right and wrong as *νοήματα* or modifications of the intellect itself, existing at first in germ and afterwards developed by circumstances, Price seems rather to regard them as acquired from the contemplation of actions, though acquired necessarily, immediately, and intuitively.

Those who are familiar with the writings of Kant (which are posterior to those of Price) will recognise many points of resemblance, both in the fundamental ideas and in the modes of expression. Amongst these are the exaltation of reason; the depreciation of the affections; their unwillingness to regard the 'partial and accidental structure of humanity,' the 'mere make and constitution of man,' as the basis of morality, in other words to recognise ethical distinctions as relative to human nature; the ultimate and irresolvable character of the idea of Rectitude; the notion that the Reason imposes this idea, as a law, upon the Will, becoming thus an independent spring of action; liberty or 'the power of acting and determining;' the importance attached to Reason as a distinct source of ideas; and, it may be added, the discrimination (so celebrated in the philosophy of Kant) of the moral (or practical) and the speculative understanding (or reason)[1].

KANT.

The course of speculation which, from somewhat different points of view, had been followed in England by Cudworth, Clarke, and Price, became still more celebrated in Germany through the writings of Kant. By

[1] It has already been noticed that Price does not, like Kant, distinguish between the words Reason and Understanding.

him all *a posteriori* methods of accounting for the nature and origin of morality are rejected as alike insufficient and degrading:

'Duty! Thou great, thou exalted name! Wondrous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience,—before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel,—whence thy original? and where find we the root of thy august descent, thus loftily disclaiming all kindred with appetite and want? to be in like manner descended from which root, is the unchanging condition of that worth which mankind can alone impart to themselves?

'Verily it can be nothing less than what advances man, as part of the physical system, above himself,—connecting him with an order of things unapproached by sense, into which the force of reason can alone pierce; which supersensible has beneath it the phenomenal system, wherewith man has only a fortuitous and contingent connexion, and so along with it the whole of his adventitiously determinable existence in space and time. It is in fact nothing else than personality, i.e. freedom and independency on the mechanism of the whole physical system,—always, however, considered as the property of a being subjected to peculiar laws emerging from his own reason, where the person, as belonging to the sensitive system, has imposed on him his own personality, in so far as this last is figured to reside in a cogitable system; upon which account we need not wonder how mankind, an inhabitant of both systems, cannot fail to venerate his higher nature, and to regard its laws with the greatest reverence[1].'

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation of Kant's Metaphysic of Ethics, 2nd ed., p. 120. This work (the most complete account of Kant's

In another place, after speaking of rival systems of Ethics, Kant proceeds:

'From the above it is clear that all ethical ideas have their origin and seat altogether *à priori* in reason (in the reason of the unlettered, of course, as much as in that of the most finished sage); that they are not susceptible of explanation upon any *à posteriori* system; that in this high *priori* source consists their dignity and title to be supreme practical principles of life; that the addition of any *posteriori* motive lessens their native force upon the will, and destroys to that extent the absolute unconditioned worth of the action; and that it is absolutely necessary, in adjusting the speculative theory of ethics, as well as of the last practical importance in the conduct of life, to deduce the laws and ideas of morality from naked reason, to deliver these pure and unmixed, and to examine and exhaust the whole circuit of this originary science of reason (i. e. to investigate the *à priori* functions and operations of reason, as a practical faculty of action): in which investigation we cannot, as in speculative philosophy, examine the particular operations of the human reason, but are forced to examine reason as such, abstractedly and apart from the nature of man; the moral law having ethical virtue to oblige all will whatsoever, and so demanding a deduction from the abstract notion of intelligent existence. And in this way alone can ethics (which in their application to man stand in need of anthropology) be fully cleared and purged of this last, rendered a pure philosophy, and so fit to be prelected on as an entire metaphysic science; bearing the while well in mind,

ethical philosophy available for the English reader) contains a translation of selected portions from Kant's various works on practical philosophy. A shorter selection, in which the passages are frequently translated with greater accuracy than in Semple's Translation, has been recently published by Mr. Abbott of Trinity College, Dublin. (Longmans, 1873.)

that, apart from possessing such metaphysic, not only is it vain to attempt to detect speculatively the ethical part of given actions, but that it is impossible, in ethical instruction (i. e. in the most common practical case), to base morality on its true foundation, to effectuate genuine moral sentiments, and determine the mind, by the idea of the *summum bonum*, to exert itself onwards toward the advancement of the general welfare of humanity[1].'

The cardinal problem of Kant's ethical philosophy is, apart from all *a posteriori* considerations, to discover and expound a moral principle of catholic extent and necessary obligation, from which our specific moral duties may be derived. The principle is thus stated: 'Act from a maxim at all times fit for law universal.' This law or principle, he tells us, is presented objectively to the will by the pure practical reason, which is to be distinguished from the pure speculative reason on the one hand, and the understanding on the other. Its origin is not in experience and observation, but 'it is entirely originated by the pure *a priori* spontaneity of practical reason.' It is, therefore, a law for all rational beings, or, as he elsewhere phrases it, for all 'intelligents' throughout the universe. To *man*, this law becomes a categorical imperative, that is, 'such an imperative as represents an action to be in itself necessary, and without regard to anything whatsoever out of and beyond itself, i. e. objectively necessary.' To the Divine Will, on the other hand, there can be no imperative, inasmuch as 'the will is already spontaneously in harmony with the law.' At the same time, even the Divine Will 'stands under' the law. The law, in fact, is 'objectively necessary and of catholic extent.'

Now it is tolerably obvious that Kant's celebrated principle is only an abstract statement of the familiar

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, pp. 21, 22.

maxim—'Do unto others, as ye would they should do unto you.' This maxim, as a compact and general summary of moral duty, we presume no moralist, whatever his theory as to the groundwork of ethics, would venture to call in question. But how are we to apply it in practice? It can, as it appears to us, be applied only by considering what would happen if a particular course of conduct became universal, how men's interests, feelings, and actions would thereby be affected. Hence the very appeal to consequences which it was Kant's object to avoid inevitably reappears. Of the impossibility of escaping these *a posteriori* considerations, when once we require a practical test of conduct, or an intelligible justification of a moral rule, Kant's writings afford many curious instances. Thus, in the first chapter of the 'Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Ethics,' there occurs the following characteristic passage: 'What, therefore, I have to do in order that my volition be morally good, requires no great acuteness. How inexperienced soever in the course of external nature, I only ask, Canst thou will thy maxim to become law universal? If not, it is to be rejected, and that not on account of any disadvantages emerging to thyself and others, but because it is unfit for law in a system of universal moral legislation'[1] (weil sie nicht als Princip in eine mögliche allgemeine Gesetzgebung passen kann). But, of course, it must occur to the reader to ask in what way this *unfitness* for 'law in a system of universal moral legislation' is to be determined, and, curiously enough, the answer is given in the preceding sentence, but from a consideration of those very consequences the appeal to which Kant so earnestly deprecates. 'Now, in order to know whether a deceitful promise consists with duty, I put the question, Can I will my maxim (to

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, p. 12.

free myself from embarrassment by a false promise) law, in a code or system of universal moral legislation? and the answer is, that the thing is impossible; for it were then vain for any one to say what he would do, others not believing the declaration, and repaying one another after the same fashion: consequently, my maxim, if elevated to the rank of law, would become self-destructive and inconsistent[1]' (mithin meine maxime, sobald sie zum allgemeinem Gesetze gemacht würde, sich selbst zerstören müsse), i.e. as his translator explains, 'unfit for law universal.' Again, in the same treatise[2], he puts a question as to the morality of a man borrowing money, when he knows that he cannot repay it, and he answers as follows: 'When the question is put as to the integrity of such conduct, I convert my maxim into law universal, and enquire how it would suit (wie es dann stehen würde) if such a principle were everywhere adopted? Whereupon I immediately observe, that it is quite unfit for a universal law of nature, and would become contradictory to itself, and self-destructive, if made so (da sehe ich nun sogleich, dass sie niemals als allgemeines Natur-[illegible] gelten und mit sich selbst zusammenstimmen könne, sondern sich nothwendig widersprechen müsse); for a uniform

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, p. 12. Mr. Abbott, in the Preface to his Translation, objects to those arguments of Kant's opponents which are founded on the word '*unfitness*.' Hence, in the passages where Mr. Semple employs this term, we have supplied the original. But we confess that to us it appears that the substitution of the word 'inconceivable' for the word 'unfit' would not, in any way, diminish the force of the objection. For, how can we determine it to be inconceivable that a certain course of action should obtain universally? Simply because, when we trace the consequences, we cannot conceive a society subsisting under the supposed conditions. The word 'unfitness' is certainly often introduced into the text by Mr. Semple, where it does not occur in the original, but, for the reasons above assigned, it does not seem to us to mislead the reader, but, on the other hand, to supply him with a perfectly legitimate explanation.

[2] Id. p. 33.

practice, by which every one should be entitled to promise what he liked, and not to keep it, would defeat the intent and end for which such promises might be made—these becoming by such a law incredible, and not possible to be acted on.'

It is evident from these and many similar passages that Kant's law or principle is, after all, only a generalisation as to the duty of thinking of others as well as of ourselves, of putting ourselves in one another's places, and of testing our actions by reference to their bearing on the general welfare of mankind at large. It is only the principle of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, and Bentham thinly disguised. For that which is fit for 'law universal' or for 'all intelligents' can only be determined by considering that which is fit for man, inasmuch as man is the only intelligent being of whom we have had experience, and that which is fit for man can only be determined by considering what are the effects of his actions and dispositions upon himself and others. And, accordingly, when, in the Metaphysic of Ethics[1], Kant asks 'what ends they are, the very essence whereof it is to be duties,' he enumerates 'one's own perfection—our neighbour's happiness,' ends which most exactly coincide with those which would be enumerated by the more enlightened exponents of the doctrines often stigmatised as 'utilitarian.' And, though he proceeds to say that 'these ends cannot be inverted,' he justifies this statement only by making the terms happiness and perfection mutually exclusive of each other, whereas the perfection of our nature, the development of all our higher capacities, is, as we should contend, the main constituent of happiness. Kant's polemic against the morality of consequences, in fact, constantly depends for its point solely on the peculiarly

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, p. 190.

narrow signification which he chooses to attach to the terms employed by his antagonists[1].

It may be said that though, *for man*, Kant's principle coincides with that of the mass of English moralists, it has a validity far beyond the human race, and coextensive with all rational beings. We must not only act, so that our acts may be fit for all men, but so that they may be fit for law universal. To this we can only reply that we have no other means of determining what is fit for law universal, than by considering what is fit for man. All arguments based on the essential characters of intelligence, as such, assume that all other rational or intelligent beings are constituted as we are; if they are so constituted, or just so far as they are so constituted, their nature is subjected to the same laws, speculative and practical, as our own. This is a mere truism. But, suppose them to be differently constituted from ourselves, it is in vain for us to speculate about them, for the very conditions of our doing so are absent. The human reason must, from the very necessity of the case, estimate the operations of all other reasons on the analogy of its own. Kant's celebrated principle, therefore, when we insist on attaching to it a definite meaning, really amounts to this: Act from a maxim at all times fit for all men, and for all other

[1] It should, however, be noticed, in justice to Kant, that his English translator often grossly exaggerates this tendency. Thus, on p. 97 of Dr. Calderwood's edition of Mr. Semple's Translation, there occurs an extraordinary passage, in which 'utilitarianism' is contrasted with 'morality,' and identified with the Selfish system. But the word 'utilitarianism,' and even the paragraph containing it, is a pure invention of the translator. Again, on the very next page, there is a marvellous statement that 'the whole conception of crime according to the Utilitarian system is that "the transgressor has injured his own happiness."' But in the original the words are 'nach dem Princip der Selbstliebe,' an utterly different thing from 'the Utilitarian system.' See the Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft, Pt. i. bk. i. § 8 (Hartenstein's edition, vol. v. p. 40).

beings constituted as man is constituted. In this shape, it undoubtedly embodies a very convenient summary of moral duty, but there is nothing to distinguish it essentially from the ultimate principle of almost all other ethical systems. That *a posteriori* method, which Kant so frequently decries, though certainly unable to legislate for all intelligent beings, is yet perfectly capable of framing laws obligatory on all mankind.

We have said that Kant, in the attempt to deduce specific moral duties, is compelled to appeal to consequences. But, though his works afford numerous instances of this inconsistency, it is undoubtedly contrary to his general theory. Thus, in the 'Fragment of a Moral Catechism[1],' he says:—'In order to know what is to be done to partake of happiness, and at the same time not to become unworthy of it, the rule and the instruction lies all alone in thy reason; that is to say, it is not needful for thee to learn the rule of thy conduct from observation and experience, nor from others in education. Thy own reason teaches and commands thee forthwith what thou hast to do.' This passage reminds us of Butler's 'Conscience,' which the plain honest man has only to consult in order to know what is right, and the criticism which we have already passed on the one may be transferred to the other. A progressive morality is, on this theory, absolutely unintelligible.

One of the most distinctive features of Kant's Moral Philosophy, a feature which it shares, however, with the doctrine of the ancient Stoics and the English systems of Cudworth, Clarke, and Price, is its depreciation of the feelings. Man's object, if he aims at being ethically perfect, should be, according to this system, not to control and cultivate the feelings, to co-ordinate them, and to

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, pp. 291–2.

direct them to the attainment of the main ends of human life, but to endeavour to act from reason alone, without any admixture of emotion. Kant admits, indeed, a complacency attendant on obedience to the law, a 'susceptibility to take an interest in the law[1],' which is properly denominated the 'Moral Sense.' But this feeling never operates antecedently to the reason, it is simply an 'ethical accomplishment[2].'

'Hence, as the moral law is at once the formal determinator of an act by pure practical reason, and is likewise the material and yet objective determinator of the object-matter of an act as good or evil, so it becomes at the same time the subjective determinator to such an act, by operating upon the morality of the subject, and effectuating an emotion which advances the force of the law upon the will. But in all this there is no antecedent feeling given in the subject himself, pointing to morality; which last hypothesis is a downright impossibility, every feeling being of the sensory; whereas the spring of ethical volitions must be quite defecated from every sensitive condition[3].'

Quite consistently with this view, we have such passages as the following:

'It is very well to show kindness to mankind from love and compassionate benevolence, as it is likewise to act justly from a love of order and method; but such cannot be the genuine ethic principles regulating man's deportment: nor is it quite congruous and suited to our station among the ranks of Intelligents *as men*, when we presume to propose ourselves as volunteers, and set ourselves loftily above the idea Duty; and when, as if mankind were independent on the law, he proposes to

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, p. 112.

[2] Id pp. 191-2.

[3] Id. pp. 106-7.

do out of his own good pleasure what he needs no commandment to enjoin[1].'

'And, in truth, when another suffers, and I allow myself to be infected by his sorrow, which, however, I cannot mitigate nor avert, then two persons suffer, although naturally the evil affects one singly; and it is quite inconceivable that it can be any one's duty to augment the physical evils in the world; and consequently there can be no obligation to act kindly OUT OF PITY. There is likewise an offensive variety of this pity called MERCY, by which is meant that kind of benevolence shown to the unworthy; but such an expression of benevolence ought never to take place betwixt man and man, no one being entitled to boast of his worthiness to be happy[2].'

'And although it cannot be questioned that every volition has an end aimed at (i. e. a matter), yet that by no means warrants the conclusion that such matter is the condition and determinator of the maxim; for if so, then maxims could not be elevated to the rank of law in a system of universal moral legislation, as they would rest on accidental, and not on necessary circumstances. Thus it is quite possible that the happiness of others may be the object of the will of an Intelligent; but if regarded as the determinator of the maxim, then it must be supposed that we not merely feel a secret gratification on perceiving the happiness of others, but that we are stimulated by a physical want or appetite to act towards it, as in the case of compassion; and so there would be no law of benevolence, 'that physical feeling not reaching all persons whatever (e. g. God)[3].'

On this conception of an ideal condition, in which all our actions are determined by a naked law of duty, acting

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, p. 115.

[2] Id. p. 266.

[3] Id. p. 94.

through the instrumentality of reason, we could hardly offer a more appropriate criticism than what is contained in the following words of Bishop Butler, writing doubtless with reference to similar theories which prevailed in his own time.

'Reason alone, whatever any one may wish, is not, in reality, a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man; but this reason, joined with those affections which God has impressed on his heart: and when these are allowed scope to exercise themselves, but under strict government and direction of reason; then it is we act suitably to our nature, and to the circumstances God has placed us in. Neither is affection itself at all a weakness; nor does it argue defect, any otherwise than as our senses and appetites do; they belong to our condition of nature, and are what we cannot be without[1].'

The wholly different part which we assign to the affections in the economy of man's moral nature, will be apparent from the sequel, and will, we trust, receive ample justification in the course of this work.

On one of the main characteristics of Kant's ethics, his peculiar conception of Freedom, we have not here entered, as it is more conveniently treated under the historical

[1] Sermon v. Even Kant himself allows that our affections, though constituting an imperfection in our nature, may prompt us to the discharge of duties. Take for instance the following passage: 'But although it is no direct duty to take a part in the joy or grief of others, yet to take an active part in their lot is; and so by consequence an indirect duty, to cultivate the sympathetic affections, and to make them serve as instruments enabling us to discharge the offices of a humane mind, upon ethical principles. Thus it is a duty not to avoid the receptacles of the poor, in order to save ourselves an unpleasant feeling, but rather to seek them out. Neither ought we to desert the chambers of the sick nor the cells of the debtor, in order to escape the painful sympathy we might be unable to repress, this emotion being a spring implanted in us by nature, prompting to the discharge of duties, which the naked representations of reason might be unable to accomplish.' Semple's Translation of Metaphysic of Ethics, pp 266–7.

portion of the chapter on Liberty and Necessity. But, to complete this account, the reader may, by anticipation, add what is there written.

The following passage, in which his theory of the 'Autonomy of the Will' is brought into sharp contrast with the theory of morals which we shall see reason for adopting, may, however, appropriately close the extracts already given.

'Autonomy of will[1] is the alone foundation of morality, and of the duties springing from it; and every other principle whatsoever not only cannot found laws of necessary obligation and catholic extent, but is in fact subversive of morality. In being independent of the matter of any law (a desired object), and being determinable by the legislative form of his own maxims, consists the ethical nature of man, and that which renders him a subject for morality: that independence is freedom negatively, while this self-legislation is freedom positively. The moral law expresses, therefore, nothing else than just the autonomy of reason, i.e. of a man's freedom or spontaneity; and this autonomy or freedom is a condition which must qualify every maxim, if these last are to harmonise with the moral law itself. On the contrary, when the matter of a volition, which can be nothing else than the object of a desire, is made part of the practical law, and represented as a condition prerequisite to its possibility, then Heteronomy (a false principle of morals) re-

[1] The pure practical reason, which is the source of the ultimate moral principle, seems to be sometimes distinguished from, sometimes identified with, the Will. Thus, on p. 153, we have the statement that 'Will has itself no prior determination, but is, in so far as it determines choice, Practical Reason itself;' and again, on pp. 165–6, 'Will, with respect singly to the relation obtaining betwixt it and the law, is, properly speaking, neither free nor unfree, for it does not regard actions, but the ideal legislation itself, i.e. is itself practical reason.'

sults; and the will ceases to prescribe to itself its own law, and is left exposed to laws taken from pathological phenomena. In this case, however, the maxim adopted by the will is formally unfit for law universal, and not only founds no obligation, but goes to subvert the principles of practical reason itself, and so militates against genuine moral sentiments, even while the actions emanating from such heteronomy are not wanting in conformity to the law[1].'

It may be said, in conclusion, that, attractive in many respects as is the theory of Kant, it seems to have been constructed without any regard to those facts of history, of human nature, and of human life of which the moralist, equally with all other scientific enquirers, is bound to take account.

The writers whom we have hitherto considered, subsequently to Hobbes, admit, though presenting many minor divergences, of being ranged under two heads. We now proceed to notice the systems of certain writers who cannot be brought under either of those heads, though, in the case of some of them, we shall perceive obvious points of resemblance with the speculations of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume. Of these, Hartley cannot well be connected with any of his predecessors, while Bentham may be compared in some respects with Hartley, and in others with Locke and Hume. Tucker and Paley stand perhaps in the closest relation to Locke, and Mandeville (whom we shall notice first) to Hobbes.

MANDEVILLE.

The works of Bernard de Mandeville, described, not without some justification, by Mackintosh, as 'the buffoon

[1] Calderwood's edition of Semple's Translation, p. 93.

and sophister of the ale-house,' though expressed in coarse and exaggerated language and written from an extremely partial point of view, are important and interesting in the history of Moral Theory, as bringing into prominence what we shall call the semi-social feelings. Mandeville, in fact, though a vastly inferior writer, occupies in the history of morals a position somewhat analogous to that of Hobbes. As the one, by force of exaggeration, called attention to the influence of the self-regarding feelings in the conduct of life and the development of society, so the other, by force of still greater exaggeration and with a bantering tone which is peculiar to himself, fastened attention on the influence of the feelings which he denominates Pride and Vanity. Shaftesbury had attempted to force the position of Hobbes by insisting on the benevolent side of human nature. Virtue, according to him, consisted in Benevolence, and civil society was the result of the sympathetic feelings which are natural to mankind. Mandeville, in opposition to this theory, undertakes to prove 'not only that the good and amiable qualities of man are not those that make him beyond other animals a sociable creature; but moreover that it would be utterly impossible, either to raise any multitudes into a populous, rich, and flourishing nation, or, when so raised, to keep and maintain them in that condition, without the assistance of what we call Evil both natural and moral[1].' This passage fairly describes the purport of Mandeville's various works, the issue of which is expressed in such apophthegms as these: that 'private vices are public benefits'; that 'man was first put upon crossing his appetites by the skilful management of wary politicians'; and that 'the nearer we search into human nature, the more

[1] A Search into the Nature of Society.

we shall be convinced, that the moral virtues are the political offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride[1].'

Man naturally pursues his own interest, and is regardless of that of others. But amongst the various self-regarding principles of human nature, there is one of the most powerful kind which impels us to crave the praise and to deprecate the contempt of our fellow-men. This principle is usually called Pride or Vanity, but in one of Mandeville's later works[2] it receives the more neutral appellation of Self-Liking, as distinct from Self-Love. Of this principle legislators and politicians have taken the utmost advantage, and, by means of it, have persuaded men to forego their own interests and to pursue those which they themselves had in view. Virtue, then, being the name given by ambitious and designing men, having their own interest solely in view, 'to every performance, by which man, contrary to the impulse of Nature, endeavours the benefit of others or the conquest of his own passions,' may not inappropriately be described as 'the political offspring begotten by Flattery upon Pride.'

It is unnecessary for us here to offer any detailed criticism of this system. It is sufficient to say that, however exaggerated the author's sentiments, and however coarse his illustrations of them, they are not, as they

[1] Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue.

[2] 'An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour.' In this Dialogue, Mandeville maintains that the Love of Honour and the Sense of Shame are both to be traced to the same cause, namely, Self-Liking, a feeling which Shame impairs while Honour fosters. 'When A proposes an action which in the eyes of B is laudable, B wishes well to A, and, to shew him his satisfaction, tells him, that such an action is an honour to him, or that he ought to be honoured for it. By saying this, B, who knows that all men are affected by self-liking, intends to acquaint A, that he thinks him in the right to gratify and indulge himself in the passion of self-liking. In this case, the word Honour is a term of Art to express our concurrence with others, our agreement with them in their sentiments concerning the esteem and value they have for themselves.'

were certainly not meant to be, mere caricatures of human nature. The Sexton, who is calculating on the deaths of the parishioners, but who, if he were to express his thoughts aloud, would be stoned out of the parish; the Soldier, who, when dressed out in a little finery, will face death in a cause he knows nothing about, represent undoubted facts in life, though facts which, to be properly understood and appreciated, must be considered in combination with a variety of others. As Adam Smith, in his observations on Mandeville, truly remarks: 'When an author proposes to explain the origin of our desires and affections, of our sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, he pretends to give an account, not only of the affairs of the very parish that we live in, but of our own domestic concerns. . . . Some of the articles, at least, must be just; and even those which are most overcharged must have had some foundation, otherwise the fraud would be detected, even by that careless inspection which we are disposed to give.' An ethical system, which finds any acceptance, must contain some element of truth. If Pride, Vanity, Flattery, Luxury, and other terms of a like description, had been confined by Mandeville to their proper signification, and he had adopted terms of a more neutral character to express those phenomena in human nature and human life which he brought into special prominence, his speculations, instead of bearing obvious marks of exaggeration and cynicism, might have been a valuable, though they would still have been a partial, contribution to the theory of morals.

HARTLEY.

The *moral* philosophy of Hartley consists of two parts: I. Of an attempt to trace the genesis of the several

principles which supply the motives of action. These are, according to the order in which he places them, imagination, ambition, self-interest, sympathy, theopathy, and the moral sense.

II. An attempt to regulate and adjust these various principles by a careful estimate of the nature and amount of pleasure which each of them, when made an object of pursuit, is calculated to produce either by itself or in combination with others, and by this method to frame a rule of life. The first part is mainly psychological, the second strictly moral.

I. All these principles are traced ultimately to sensation. They are all factitious, and are all of them the result of a constant repetition of sensations blended together, and combined, as it were, into a new entity by means of association. Sensation is the common foundation of them all, and each in its turn, when sufficiently generated, contributes to generate and fashion all the rest. Let sensation e. g. generate imagination; then will sensation and imagination together generate ambition, or love of honour and consideration; sensation, imagination, and ambition will generate self-interest; sensation, imagination, ambition, and self-interest will generate sympathy; sensation, imagination, ambition, self-interest, and sympathy will generate theopathy; and all these together constitute the moral sense. It is by this process that the higher elements in human nature are successively formed. By each formation we rise higher and higher, the last-formed principle being always the highest, as rising on a higher foundation. The sensible pleasures are alone original, the others are factitious. In this way we advance from the organic and bodily to the imaginative and intellectual, and from the intellectual to the moral and the spiritual pleasures. As we advance we become less and

less selfish, more and more spiritual: we forget ourselves more and more, until all regard for self is lost in the love of others, and eminently in the love of God, and in admiration of those moral attributes which he alone exhibits in perfection. In Hartley's language, we begin with self-love and end with self-annihilation.

It is not our object to discuss the theory of association in its application to the genesis of the affections and passions, or that of the various powers of the understanding. The theory is now merged in the wider theory of evolution—a theory resting on a principle of which Hartley had no knowledge, viz. the transmission by inheritance of acquired powers of thought and action. We therefore pass at once to the second part of Hartley's Moral Philosophy, i. e. the construction of the rule of life.

II. This is effected by the method just referred to, and would be no less interesting and instructive to the general reader than to the moralist, were it not for the grave defects of Hartley as a writer. These are great diffuseness, loose reasoning, inaccuracy of language, combined occasionally with a singular infelicity of expression.

The rule of life is, in brief, this: that while the pleasures attendant on sensation, imagination, ambition, and self-interest ought not to be made objects of primary pursuit, the three remaining classes of pleasures—the last generated, and the most exalted — not only may, but should, each of them, be sought for its own sake. For (1) these are not only consistent with, but actually augment, the enjoyment of all the previous pleasures. 'Since the regard to benevolence, piety, and the moral sense procures the pleasures of sensation, imagination, and ambition, in their greatest perfection for the most part;

it must favour gross self-interest, or the pursuit of the means of these[1].'

(2) Each of these pleasures is consistent with itself. Sensual excess destroys the capacity of sensual enjoyment. In the case of these pleasures, on the other hand, the capacity of enjoyment grows with indulgence. The more we practise benevolence the more capable are we of enjoying its pleasures. It is indefinitely expansive: it increases with exercise to the end of life, and by so doing suggests a pleasing hope of its continuance in another state of existence. So also it is with the pleasures of the moral sense and of theopathy.

(3) These pleasures are perfectly consistent with each other. He who makes the pleasures of sympathy and theopathy primary objects of pursuit will secure the pleasures of the moral sense, and he who would secure the pleasures of the moral sense must seek first those of benevolence and of piety. In other words, he who regards the well-being of others and the approbation of God as among the great ends of life will secure the approbation of his own conscience, and such satisfaction as consciousness of rectitude can bestow; while no man can enjoy this self-approbation, unless he have cultivated those feelings out of which the pleasures of the moral sense have grown.

Hartley's account of the nature, formation, and authority of the moral sense is eminently deserving of the attention of the moralist.

The moral sense, or sense of right and wrong, he maintains, ought to have great influence, even in the most explicit and deliberate actions. It ought not only to have some, but the sole influence on emergent occasions.

[1] Observations on Man, Part ii prop. lxvi.

That the moral sense is such an immediate guide appears from the following, amongst other, reasons.

1. 'Because it offers itself in the various occurrences of life, at the same time producing its credentials. For it warns us beforehand and calls us to account afterwards. It condemns or acquits: it rewards by the pleasures of self-approbation, or punishes by the pains of self-condemnation. It appears with the authority of a judge, and one who knows the heart.'

2. 'The moral sense is, as we have seen, generated chiefly by piety, benevolence, and rational self-interest, all which are explicit guides of life in deliberate action. Since, therefore, these are excluded on sudden occasions, through want of time to weigh and determine, it seems highly reasonable to admit the moral sense, which is their offspring and whose dictates are immediate, as their substitute[1].'

The ultimate appeal in all matters of right and wrong is reason; reason biased by self-love or sympathy and theopathy; in other words, by reason pointing out the means most conducive to our well-being or the well-being of others, or what is likely to be pleasing to our Maker. Still, even in the deliberate actions of life, the spontaneous and unverified feeling, though mechanically generated, has a certain authority, while in emergencies we incur the greatest danger by departing from it. The passions, according to Malebranche, have a subtle power of justifying themselves, and he who pauses under the influence of temptation, to reason on what is best, is sure to do wrong.

If we compare Hartley's method of constructing a rule of conduct with that subsequently propounded by Bentham, we shall see that, although it presents a superficial resemblance, it is really different in principle. Hartley,

[1] Observations on Man, Part ii. prop. lxxiv.

like Bentham, is wholly occupied in the consideration of pleasures and pains, and in estimating their *value*. But with him pleasures differ in kind as well as degree, and the pursuit of the higher kinds of pleasures brings the greatest amount of satisfaction in life.

There is another point of distinction between Hartley and Bentham which is worthy of notice. Hartley is chiefly, though not wholly, occupied in tracing the spontaneous, or, as he calls it, the mechanical, i. e. unconscious growth of the moral faculties in general, and specially of the moral sense. Bentham is wholly occupied with the verification, or rather reconstruction, of the received code of morality. His sole object is to discover a 'principle' by which actions and sentiments may be tested, and 'what one expects to find in a principle,' he says[1], 'is something that points out some external consideration, as a means of warranting and guiding the internal sentiments of approbation and disapprobation.'

Bentham's object is to show what is best in the abstract. Hartley endeavours to show how the moral sentiments grow up, and the elements of which they are composed. He attempts an analysis of conscience, to determine its authority and use, rather than to provide for its rectification.

LOCKE.

In a review of the English moralists, we cannot altogether pass over without notice the passages bearing on moral theory which occur in Locke's Essay, especially as they seem to have suggested the leading principles of a work, which of all books on the subject in our language is perhaps the most popular, Paley's Moral Philosophy. But as it was not Locke's object to write expressly on

[1] Principles of Morals and Legislation, ch. ii. § 12.

morals, as the passages occur only incidentally, and as, for the most part, their meaning is perfectly clear, it is not necessary to discuss them at any length.

In the first Book, he maintains in a separate chapter[1] that there are no innate practical principles in the mind, but that, like all other principles, our moral principles admit of being discovered by our ordinary faculties. The 'true ground of Morality,' he says[2], 'can only be the Will and Law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments, and power enough to call to account the proudest offender.' Now God 'by an inseparable connection has joined Virtue and Public Happiness together.' Whatever, therefore, contributes to the Public Happiness is conformable to the Will of God, and we are under an 'eternal obligation' to promote it. This obligation is enforced by the legal, the social, and the religious sanctions[3], especially by the latter, or 'the Hell God has ordained for the punishment of those that transgress His rules.'

This is, in sum, Locke's moral theory, as expounded in his Essay, but there remains a peculiarity in his view of the nature of reasoning on moral subjects which deserves separate notice. In several places in the Essay[4], he speaks of Morality as being, like Mathematics, capable of Demonstration. 'Since, the precise real essence' (which, in this case, is neither more nor less than the Definition) 'of the things moral words stand for, may be perfectly known; and so the congruity or incongruity of the things themselves be certainly discovered, in which consists perfect knowledge.' Thus, for instance, if we define wrong

[1] Bk. i. ch. 3. [2] § 6.

[3] Bk. ii. ch. 28. §§ 5–13; Bk. i. ch. 3. § 6.

[4] See especially Bk. iii. ch. 11. §§ 16–18; Bk. iv. ch. 3. §§ 18–20; ch. 4. §§ 6–10.

and define stealing, we may, without the slightest hesitation, pronounce that stealing is wrong, and, in a great number of cases, that this or that act is an act of stealing, and, therefore, wrong. This is unquestionable, provided that men are agreed as to their definitions, but this proviso obviously introduces one great difficulty in the way of constituting morals a 'demonstrative' science, while another difficulty of a no less formidable character presents itself in the fact that virtue and vice admit of degrees, and it is often in the estimation of these degrees (which by no means admit of precise definition) that the main business of the moralist consists. Moreover, as has frequently been pointed out, the main obstacle to precision in morals is to be found not so much in the settlement of general propositions as in the determination of particular cases, depending often on the consideration of a great variety of circumstances, of which different men may form the most different estimates. But, after all, the amount of virtual agreement which exists amongst civilised races on matters of right and wrong shows that Locke's statement, though put forward with far too little of qualification and explanation, contains a considerable amount of truth.

TUCKER.

Abraham Tucker is a writer of considerable merit, both as a psychologist and a moralist. He exhibits a singular felicity of illustration, and, though his views are often partial, he always approaches philosophical questions in a spirit of good-sense and moderation. The first part of 'The Light of Nature Pursued' contains several chapters on ethical questions, in which we can trace the influence, sometimes of Hartley, sometimes of Locke.

Like Hartley, he regards the benevolent affections and

the 'moral sense' as formed by association, or, according to his own phraseology, by *translation*, from the purely self-regarding feelings. Thus, after speaking of the acquired love of money, he says:

'One might produce many other instances to shew that our motives generate one another; that the children survive after their parents are dead and forgotten; and sometimes, like the viper's brood, destroy those that gave them birth. Many of these descendant motives gain the credit of being coeval with ourselves, and that even among the considerate and studious..... But upon a strict and impartial scrutiny it may not be impossible to trace out their origin, and perhaps make it appear that all the motives actuating us in our riper years, except sensations of pleasure and pain, or our natural and acquired appetites, are of the translated kind. Through this channel we derive most of our tastes, inclinations, sentiments, moral senses, checks of conscience, obligations, impulses of fancy, attachments to professions, fondness for diversions, regard to reputation, views of prudence, virtues and vices, and in general all those pursuits, whether of distant or present aims, that render the occupations of men different from the amusements of children[1].'

In the chapter on Benevolence, he defines Benevolence as the 'love of pleasing,' and in a later passage in the same chapter[2], he assigns a man's own happiness as the ultimate end of action:

'I have assigned happiness, a man's own happiness, or the aggregate of his satisfactions, for the ultimate end of action: therefore it behoves me to shew what reference the quality I recommend bears to that end, or else it will not appear worth the wise man's possessing. Nor does this contradict what I laid down a little while ago,

[1] Light of Nature, Pt. i. ch. 18. [2] Pt. i. ch. 34.

that a benevolent act must carry nothing of self in view: for it has been made evident upon several occasions already, that our ultimate end is very rarely our ultimate point of view, but we have divers principles, like so many stages of our journey, which occupy our thoughts from time to time as we proceed[1]. Thus, when the wise man meets an opportunity of doing a kind thing, he follows his disposition to embrace it without looking for anything further; he performs the good office because he likes it, because he judges it right: but we must imagine he had taken his own heart under examination before, and determined to cherish benevolence there, because of the connexion he had observed it to have with happiness, or with some other principle wherein he had formerly found the like connexion. Let us then suppose him utterly divested of all his desires, except that of happiness, and that virtues, vices, tastes, and inclinations of every fashion, were to be sold like clothes ready made at the saleshop: let us consider why he would choose to purchase benevolence as most convenient for his wear.'

The reader will not fail to observe the striking contrast between Tucker's theory that a man designedly pursues benevolence because of its probable effects on his own happiness, and the theory of Hutcheson that he pursues it simply because his nature irresistibly impels him thereto. Even by Hartley, the process by which Self-Love passes into benevolence is regarded as almost an unconscious one.

[1] It may be noticed, in passing, that Tucker has an advantage over most other writers of the so-called Utilitarian School in not constantly putting forward the ultimate principle of action, i. e. the general happiness of mankind, as an object to be consciously and expressly aimed at. Such *axiomata media*, as the perfection of the individual, are justly regarded by him as frequently affording sufficient indications of right conduct, without any further reference to ultimate ends.

At the end of the chapter on Virtue[1], there is a passage on utility as the test of virtue, which has a special interest in relation to the subsequent speculations of Paley and Bentham:

'I apprehend several advantages accruing from our resting the merit of virtue upon this true and solid basis, its usefulness: for if you talk of an essential and independent goodness, few can discern it; if you appeal to the judgment of the wise, many think themselves wiser; if you tell them that every act of virtue affords greater immediate enjoyment than the practice of vice, they will not believe you, nor do I know how they should, as it contradicts their experience; so you will have your principle to battle for, before you can deduce anything from it. But we proceed upon a postulatum that will readily be granted, for nobody can deny that he had rather have his desires gratified than crossed: we need only exhort men not to forget their absent friends, nor to neglect such desires as they may have at another time, for the sake of one or two at present uppermost in their thoughts: so the door stands open before us, and we shall be willingly admitted to go on in showing the necessary connexion of virtue with gratification. A second benefit of referring virtue to use is, that it helps us to rectify our notions of it, to interpret our rules, and teaches us which of them to prefer when they appear to clash: for our moral sense, though the best guide we have, is not always to be trusted; education, custom, prejudice, and human frailty, will sometimes set it to a wrong point, and when suspicions of this kind arise, there is no surer way of trying the justness of them than by examining whether the courses we find ourselves prompted to tend more upon the whole to the increase or diminution

[1] Pt. i ch. 29.

of happiness. Many of our rules may be understood variously, but when this is the case, that construction, which appears evidently the most conducive to general convenience, ought to be chosen as the truest: nor is it scarce possible to apply a rule always properly, or know what circumstances require an exception, without understanding the drift and design of it: and when two of them interfere, we can never determine the preference so well as when we can clearly discern which of them it would be most dangerous to break through. For a third advantage of frequently tracing out the good consequences of virtue, we may reckon that it will give us a better liking of her, and greater confidence in the rules she dictates; for by consideration and continual observation of their tendency, we shall often discover an expedience we could not at first descry, and shall more readily entertain an opinion of the like expedience in other cases where we cannot discern it. Whatever practices have the general approbation of mankind or our moral sense urges us earnestly to, though seeming needless or inconvenient in our present apprehension, will then carry a strong presumption, sufficient to persuade us of their being beneficial, and we shall pursue them by desire, not necessity; that is, not as an obligation but as our interest. This seems the readiest way to conduct us to a love of virtue for her own sake, for having once gotten our thorough confidence and esteem, wherever she appears she will become our ultimate point of view, which we shall follow without looking for anything beyond, and this we may do without supposing her the ultimate end of action, for we have seen before that these two are often different.'

Paley's obligations to Tucker were undoubtedly very considerable, and, in the Preface to the 'Moral and Poli-

tical Philosophy,' he acknowledges them in the amplest manner[1].

On Tucker's contributions to the Necessitarian controversy we shall have an opportunity of speaking in a subsequent chapter.

PALEY.

Paley only expressed what appears to have been a common opinion amongst the clergy of the eighteenth century, when he founded Morality solely on the Will of God, and made future rewards and punishments the only considerations which oblige to the practice of it[2]. Virtue is even defined by him as 'the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.' But when we come to ask what is the Will of God, we are told that it is the

[1] 'There is, however, one work to which I owe so much, that it would be ungrateful not to confess the obligation: I mean the writings of the late Abraham Tucker, Esq., part of which were published by himself, and the remainder since his death, under the title of "The Light of Nature Pursued, by Edward Search, Esq." I have found in this writer more original thinking and observation upon the several subjects that he has taken in hand, than in any other, not to say, than in all others put together. His talent also for illustration is unrivalled. But his thoughts are diffused through a long, various, and irregular work. I shall account it no mean praise, if I have been sometimes able to dispose into method, to collect into heads and articles, or to exhibit in more compact and tangible masses, what in that otherwise excellent performance, is spread over too much surface.'

[2] Thus, in a criticism of Shaftesbury's Characteristics, published in 1751, by John Brown, M.A., Vicar of Newcastle-on-Tyne, the author maintains, in the interests of Revealed Religion, that 'the only Reason or Motive, by which Individuals can possibly be *induced* or *obliged* to the Practice of Virtue, must be the *Feeling* immediate or the *Prospect* of future *private Happiness*,' while Virtue itself is no other than 'the Voluntary production of the greatest public Happiness.' Similar theses were advanced in a criticism of Dr. Samuel Clarke's moral theories by John Clarke, Master of the Hull Grammar School, in a work printed, without date, about the middle of the century. It seems to have been supposed by many divines that any moral system which appealed, in the last resort, to other sanctions than those of human law or future rewards and punishments, must necessarily be irreligious.

happiness of his creatures, and hence the practical test of right and wrong action is its tendency to promote the general welfare or the reverse. 'So the actions are to be estimated by their tendency. Whatever is expedient, is right. It is the utility of any moral rule alone, which constitutes the obligation of it[1].' It will be seen that, putting aside the theological supports, of which the author soon loses sight, this system really coincides with that of Bentham[2], which will be next discussed. By Bentham, however, the leading questions of morals are treated with far more precision and in a far more scientific spirit, and, hence, he may be taken as the most fitting and instructive representative of what has been called the Utilitarian School.

BENTHAM.

We have seen that the earlier writers on morals laboured to find some principle of approbation or disapprobation in the human mind capable of speaking with authority on matters of right and wrong, and of enforcing obedience to its dictates. Such principles are conscience, moral sense,

[1] Moral and Political Philosophy, bk. ii. ch. 6.

[2] It is worthy of remark, as a point of comparison with Bentham, that Paley insists strenuously on the view that pleasures differ only in intensity and duration. In the chapter on Happiness, he says: 'In strictness, any condition may be denominated happy, in which the amount or aggregate of pleasure exceeds that of pain; and the degree of happiness depends upon the quantity of this excess. And the greatest quantity of it ordinarily attainable in human life, is what we mean by happiness, when we inquire or pronounce what human happiness consists in. In which inquiry I will omit much usual declamation on the dignity and capacity of our nature; the superiority of the soul to the body, of the rational to the animal part of our constitution; upon the worthiness, refinement, and delicacy of some satisfactions, or the meanness, grossness, and sensuality of others; because I hold that pleasures differ in nothing, but in continuance and intensity: from a just computation of which, confirmed by what we observe of the apparent cheerfulness, tranquillity, and contentment of men of different tastes, tempers, stations, and pursuits, every question concerning human happiness must receive its decision.'

intellectual intuition, and the like. This mode of treating the subject is vehemently opposed by Bentham. It is, according to his judgment, a method which is wholly *arbitrary*, and rests the laws of conduct on no solid foundation. It is despotical and anarchical at the same moment. It is, in short, no *principle* of approbation, but rather an absence of all principle. What is expected in a principle is something that points out an external consideration as a means of testing, warranting, and guiding the internal sentiment—some standard by which our spontaneous approbation and disapprobation may be tried. Such a principle, as he conceives, is that of utility in the sense which he attaches to the word. 'By the principle of utility,' he tells us at the very outset of his book, 'is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness[1].' Now that which promotes or opposes happiness being no other than pleasure or pain, the utility of an action or disposition consists solely in its tendency to produce or augment pleasure and to prevent or diminish pain. To attain pleasure and to avoid pain thus become the great ends of life and the springs of all our actions. An act is good, not because it is approved by conscience, or because it proceeds from one motive rather than another, but simply because it promotes the happiness of those whom it affects. The moralist and the legislator are wholly concerned with pleasures and pains; they deter-

[1] Principles of Morals and Legislation, ch. i. sect. 2. It is on this work, and not on the Deontology, that an estimate of Bentham's views should be based. In the latter work, published after Bentham's death, and composed of fragments which were found among his papers, it is impossible to discriminate between what is due to himself and what to his editor.

mine the rules of conduct by summing up the pleasures and pains consequent upon actions, and they seek to fashion the will in conformity to these rules by rewards and punishments, that is by artificial pleasures and pains expressly contrived for the purpose of urging men to or restraining them from particular courses of conduct. There are many sorts of pleasures and pains, and these it is the business of the moralist and legislator to compare and to weigh one against another.

These principles supply Bentham with a method of deducing the rules of conduct, a method which may be easily stated though it requires considerable skill and much practice to use it with precision. It consists in discriminating right and wrong actions, and estimating the amount of moral good or evil which may be predicated of them, by determining their effects on the sum total of human happiness. It is, as Dumont remarks[1], a kind of arithmetical process, the numbers with which the calculation is performed being pleasures and pains. The best action is that which produces the largest amount of pleasure, and the worst action that which produces the largest amount of pain. It is a common objection to this method that the consequences of human action are so numerous as to be practically incalculable. For it is plain that they do not terminate with the action itself nor with the individual who is affected by it in the first instance. They extend at least to those who are more immediately connected with him, and often to a whole neighbourhood or even to the country at large. Thus, a mischievous act

[1] 'Pour avoir une connaissance precise du principe de l'utilité, il a fallu composer une table de tous les plaisirs et de toutes les peines. Ce sont là les premiers élémens, les chiffres du calcul moral. Comme en arithmétique on travaille sur des nombres qu'il faut connaître, en législation on travaille sur des plaisirs et des peines, dont il faut avoir une exacte énumération.' Dumont, Discours Préliminaire to the Traités de Législation

may, by destroying the sense of security, paralyse the industry of a country. This difficulty Bentham himself attempts to meet. He divides the mischievous effects of an action into two parcels, subdividing each of these into two others, and thus takes, as it were, an inventory of them, one by one[1]. There is, 1st, the *primary* mischief, 'which is sustained by an assignable individual, or a multitude of assignable individuals,' 2nd, the *secondary* mischief, 'which, taking its origin from the former, extends itself either over the whole community, or over some other multitude of unassignable individuals.'

'The primary mischief of an act,' to employ Bentham's own words, 'may again be distinguished into two branches: 1. the *original:* and, 2. the *derivative.* By the original branch, I mean that which alights upon and is confined to any person who is a sufferer in the first instance, and on his own account; the person, for instance, who is beaten, robbed, or murdered. By the derivative branch, I mean any share of mischief which may befal any other assignable persons in consequence of his being a sufferer, and no otherwise. These persons must, of course, be persons who, in some way or other, are connected with him. Now, the ways in which one person may be connected with another, have been already seen: they may be connected in the way of *interest* (meaning self-regarding interest) or merely in the way of *sympathy.* And again, persons connected with a given person, in the way of interest, may be connected with him either by affording *support* to him, or by deriving it from him.

'The secondary mischief, again, may frequently be seen to consist of two other shares or parcels: the first consisting of *pain;* the other of *danger.* The pain which it produces is a pain of apprehension; a pain grounded

[1] See Principles of Morals and Legislation, ch. xii.

on the apprehension of suffering such mischiefs or inconveniences, whatever they may be, as it is the nature of the primary mischief to produce. It may be styled, in one word, the *alarm*. The danger is the *chance*, whatever it may be, which the multitude it concerns may, in consequence of the primary mischief, stand exposed to, of suffering such mischiefs or inconveniences. For danger is nothing but the chance of pain, or, what comes to the same thing, of loss of pleasure[1].'

The good effects of an action would, of course, admit of being estimated in a similar manner, though for Bentham's more immediate purposes, the character of which we shall presently consider, such a procedure is unnecessary.

In endeavouring to interpret any writer, it is, as we have seen all along, important to bear constantly in mind the circumstances under which he wrote and the particular purpose he had in writing. This is more especially important in studying the Moral Philosophy of Bentham. Bentham has left no treatise of any moment in which the treatment of morals was his principal object—for the Deontology[2] cannot fairly be regarded as a work of Bentham, and the treatise on Morals and Legislation is not, in any adequate sense of the words, a treatise on morals. The latter discusses the subject only incidentally, and merely so far as Bentham thought necessary for the main object of the work. It is, as Dumont rightly describes it, a treatise on the principles of Legislation in general, and was doubtless intended by Bentham as an introduction to the various works on Legislation which, as he informs us in the Preface, it was his intention to write. It may be described more accurately and more completely as a treatise on the principles of Legislation

[1] Sects. 4, 5.

[2] See above, p. 100, note.

in general, with particular application to the subject of the Penal Law. The great aim of the work is a systematic classification of delicts, with reference to the punishment to be inflicted on delinquents. This consideration throws much light on the Moral Philosophy of Bentham. It accounts for many omissions and imperfections; for the prominence given to many, and those subordinate, parts of the subject, and the obscurity in which other parts have been left; for the partial and imperfect nature of his method; for an apparent insensibility to some of the finer and deeper elements of human nature; and, lastly, for a general coarseness of treatment and expression. It explains, in fact, his whole mode of dealing with the subject. Had he written expressly as a moralist, he must have entertained such problems as the nature of the moral faculty, the origin of moral ideas, the formation of character, the ideal excellence or proper perfection of a human being. Nor, had he written with the same objects as themselves, could he have shown so little appreciation of his predecessors. Writing as a legislator or a jurist, his theory of morals is almost necessarily partial and superficial. His attention is directed more to the consequences of actions on society at large, than to the character they indicate in the individuals themselves. His view of the convenience of virtue has somewhat obscured his perception of its worth.

The consideration of the immediate object which Bentham had in view accounts also for the peculiar language in which his theories are expressed. Bentham, it must be remembered, wrote not only as a jurist, but also as a reformer of law. He was conscious that he could only succeed in this object by overcoming many prejudices, and uprooting many long-established fallacies, which, for

generations, had gained complete possession of the public mind. He had, therefore, to forge strong weapons of attack, and to wield them with unsparing force and energy. The coarseness of his language is no doubt calculated and intentional. He sought to force conviction by plainness of speech and the undisguised exposure of popular delusions. Hence the recurrence in his writings of so many expressions which are calculated rather to repel than to win his opponents, and which often place his theories in their least amiable light. He had proposed to himself a certain part to play, and this part he played with exaggeration.

The attitude in which Bentham approaches the subject of morals accounts also for the singular omission of any recognition of the individual conscience among the sanctions of right conduct. What Bentham calls the Moral Sanction[1] is what we term the Social Sanction, that of the praise or blame of society, while the Moral Sanction, strictly so called, that of self-approbation or self-disapprobation, is entirely ignored by him. He treats the sense of right and wrong in individuals with as little respect as Hobbes, and for the same reason. Both writers alike, though from different points of view, are mainly concerned with the consideration of Law, and it is often in the individual conscience that the supremacy of law finds one of its principal obstacles. Let the laws be thoroughly adapted to attain their proper ends, the alleviation of

[1] Thus in ch. 3 of the Principles of Morals and Legislation, he enumerates the various sanctions of conduct, as the physical, the political, the moral, and the religious, and of the third he says: 'If' (that is, the pleasures and pains be) 'at the hands of such *chance* persons in the community, as the party in question may happen in the course of his life to have concerns with, according to each man's spontaneous disposition, and not according to any settled or concerted rule, it may be said to issue from the *moral* or *popular sanction*.' Again, in a note to ch. 15, § 3, he identifies the 'moral sanction' with the love of reputation.

human misery and the promotion of human happiness, Bentham might have argued, and then the conscience of the individual has no independent province; if it assert itself at all, it will probably be in opposition to the interests of the community. Nor does he appear to have attached any more importance to conscience, regarded as an impelling or restraining force, than to the judgments which it forms. The instruments by which, according to him, human conduct is regulated are self-love,—regard for the opinion of others respecting ourselves,—fear of God,—and fear of the Law. Conscience is not so much as mentioned in this connexion. He would, no doubt, have admitted, with Hobbes, that individuals might be found, whose self-respect was alone sufficient to preserve them from wrong-doing, who feared the reflex action of their own conscience more than any other influence whatsoever, but he would have maintained that these were few in number, while, in dealing with the mass of mankind, the influence of conscience might be disregarded altogether.

Had Bentham approached his subject in the character of a moralist rather than a jurist, he could hardly have failed to treat our spontaneous feelings on matters of right and wrong with more tenderness and regard, even while seeking to inform and enlighten them. A moralist has constantly before his mind the fact that obedience to Law has no moral significance, till it proceed from self-respect and regard for others, until, in fact, it be dictated by Conscience. This feeling it is one of his great aims to create, as constituting the crown and perfection of the moral character.

A similar explanation might be offered of the fact that Bentham so frequently appears to ignore the benevolent feelings as an independent spring of action. This is, by

no means, however, universally the case[1], though the passages in which sympathy is lightly spoken of, or passed over without notice, have undoubtedly given some occasion for the misrepresentations of Bentham's system of morals as a selfish one. That it should be the direct aim of the moralist, as distinguished from the jurist, to foster, to develope, and to regulate these feelings, hardly needs to be remarked.

The same considerations likewise enable us to account for a peculiarity in Bentham's treatment of morals which, more than any other circumstance, has brought disrepute on his system. It is because he writes chiefly as a legislator that he deals exclusively with mere quantities of pleasures and pains, with apparently little regard to the sources from which they spring. His great object is the happiness of the community, which is to be attained by the augmentation of their pleasures, and the diminution of their pains. It does not appear that he regarded one pleasure as superior in kind, however superior it might be in degree, to another; nor is it his aim to interest men in certain pursuits and pleasures more than in others. What recommends one pleasure more than another is simply its duration or intensity, its fecundity, &c.[2] This view of the subject is natural in the legis-

[1] Amongst many other passages to the same effect, we may adduce the following, as showing that Bentham undoubtedly recognised sympathy as at once a real and an original principle of human nature: 'Happily there is no primæval and constant source of antipathy in human nature, as there is of sympathy.' Principles of Morals and Legislation, ch. vi. § 27.

Speaking of the various forces by which the feeling of enmity is assuaged or counteracted, he commences the enumeration thus: 'Humanity, a principle which nothing perhaps can stifle in the most atrocious minds, awakens a secret remorse in mine.' Id. ch. xiv.

[2] The circumstances which are to be considered in estimating a pleasure or pain are enumerated in the fourth chapter of the 'Principles.' This enumeration will be given and criticised in the next chapter. The superiority of what are called the 'higher' pleasures might, perhaps, be

lator. To attempt to discriminate between the finer and coarser pleasures would be beyond his province, and probably do more harm than good. It would repress spontaneous efforts after moral excellence, and tend to produce an uniform type of character, doing right mechanically rather than from an intelligent love of virtue. A legislator, in constituting offences and enforcing right conduct by punishment, must appeal to reasons which are plain and obvious to all, and are appreciable even by the criminal himself. The moralist, on the other hand, in seeking to form the character, to develop the higher and more characteristic elements in man, to give dignity and elevation to human nature, and to create a taste for pleasures more refined and exquisite, naturally brings forward other considerations than the mere quantity of satisfaction to be acquired, and considers the sources from which the pleasures flow.

There are pleasures, as we shall point out at length in the next chapter, which the moralist seeks to recommend, more refined and human, though less powerful, than those which attract the great mass of mankind. If we allow, with Bentham, that utility is the measure of right conduct, we must remember also that humanity is the measure of utility.

To this subject we shall presently recur, but, meanwhile, it is worthy of notice that Bentham's failure to discriminate between what we shall call the higher and the lower classes of pleasure is undoubtedly connected with that unimaginative treatment of morals which has so often been pointed out as one of his gravest defects, and which is so little calculated to impel to tender or heroic action, however effective it may be in deterring from crime.

established on Bentham's principles, though he does not attempt this task himself.

Still, while we admit that, in constructing rules of conduct, Bentham looks too exclusively to the mere quantity of pleasures and pains consequent on actions, it should be observed that, after all, this view represents an important side of moral theory. It is always an additional recommendation to morality, if the moralist can shew (as, for instance, Hartley has often so successfully done) that the cultivation of the finer principles in human nature is calculated to produce the greatest amount of satisfaction, both to ourselves and others, in the whole of life, and that, even if less intense, they are more durable and constant than any others. That pleasures admit of being discriminated by more essential characters than those which Bentham enumerates, we hope presently to shew, but, while human nature remains what it is, it will always continue to be influenced by considerations such as those which Bentham addresses to it.

Notwithstanding these obvious defects, it is, nevertheless, worthy of remark that Bentham, in approaching morals from the legal and political side of the subject, and therefore dealing with the action and its consequences rather than the motive from which it springs or the character it indicates, is led to dwell on a side of morals which the ordinary moralist is apt to overlook. He calls attention forcibly and emphatically to the consequences. It is with him the effect of the action on the sum total of human happiness which gives it its moral character. It is not enough that an action is prompted by a motive of a particular class, as, for instance, of sympathy or religious feeling, to constitute it a good action. It must conduce to the pleasure and happiness of mankind. All motives, in turn, give rise to good, bad, and indifferent actions, and a mischievous action is no better, because it proceeds from a motive which is ordi-

narily esteemed good. One class of motives, in fact, is only better than another, because it more frequently gives rise to actions of a beneficent or useful character. And hence the desirability of neutral terms, for, by attaching to our motives terms which signify praise or blame, we are apt to overlook the fact that right or wrong action may result from any kind of motive whatsoever[1]. This subject is brought prominently forward by Bentham, while moralists, in general, have been apt to pass it over altogether, an omission which popular language and opinion may account for, if they do not justify. That a good motive, or rather a motive which is ordinarily called good, is no excuse for a wrong act, if, at least, the agent be aware of the probable consequences of his action, would certainly be one of the most useful lessons which could be given in practical morals.

Secondly, in considering the advantages which accrue from Bentham's mode of treatment, we may apply to him the remark already made respecting Hobbes. He brings into prominence a point with which we are now perfectly familiar, but which was forced upon the moralist by writers who approached Moral Philosophy from the side of Law, viz. the effect of Society and of Law on the character and actions of the individual[2]. Butler and writers of his time seem to have ignored these influences, and write as if the individual conscience were wholly independent of all external forces. Like Hobbes also,

[1] The disquisition on Motives forms the tenth chapter of the Principles of Morals and Legislation, and is one of the most instructive and important chapters in the work.

[2] We may compare with the point of view of Hobbes and Bentham what is said by Aristotle, in contrasting the effects on moral conduct of the education of the family and of the state: Ἡ μὲν οὖν πατρικὴ πρόσταξις οὐκ ἔχει τὸ ἰσχυρὸν οὐδὲ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὐδὲ δὴ ὅλως ἡ ἑνὸς ἀνδρὸς, μὴ βασιλέως ὄντος ἥ τινὸς τοιούτου· ὁ δὲ νόμος ἀναγκαστικὴν ἔχει δύναμιν, λόγος ὢν ἀπό τινος φρονήσεως καὶ νοῦ. Eth. x 9 (12).

Bentham notes the comparative weakness of the higher elements in human nature, and, like him, errs as a moralist in not making the development of these principles the primary object of concern. It is clear that the moral progress of mankind must consist in their depending less and less on force and external compulsion for the performance of just and virtuous actions.

As time goes on, it is to be hoped a greater number of men in each generation are influenced by self-respect and sympathy rather than by force. Hobbes, as we have seen, writes consistently in the belief that it is the inevitable lot of man to act rightly only because he is forced to do so, and that all that the most philanthropical legislator can do is to take care that men live peacefully together. Bentham, owing to the causes which we have been examining, exposes himself also to a similar objection. It may be added that both authors fail to see that law itself must have had its origin in the moral sentiment of mankind, however imperfect, in the first instance, that moral sentiment may have been.

Thirdly, there is another point which Bentham, writing as a jurist, has treated in a manner more complete and exhaustive than any mere moralist has succeeded in doing —namely, the analysis of the state of mind in which an offence is committed. This analysis was forced upon him by his subject, and he has handled it in a manner truly admirable. In dealing with the question of punishment, he had to study not only the gravity of the offence, but the degree of guilt in the offender. This depends on a variety of circumstances which must be taken into consideration before pain is inflicted. The seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the 'Principles' contain what he has written on this subject, and they are equally important to the moralist and to the jurist.

In conclusion, we may remark that, though morals were treated only incidentally by Bentham, and hence, when considered purely as a moralist, he is chargeable with grave defects, there is no author who has equally succeeded in discriminating the respective provinces of Law and Morality[1]. This, like the former question, was forced on him by the nature of his subject. He had to consider what cases were meet for punishment, and, as punishment is the legal sanction, the question necessarily emerged—Of what wrong acts ought the Law to take cognisance, and what ought it to leave to the deterrent influence of other sanctions? or, as the question is phrased in the nineteenth chapter of the 'Principles,' What are the limits between Private Ethics and the Art of Legislation?

We have attempted, in this brief review, to confine our remarks to writers whose systems are either distinctive or widely popular, or who have made real contributions to the Science of Morals. Hence we have omitted to notice writers like those of the later Scottish school, who do not seem to us to require special attention. Moreover, we have made no attempt, in this place, to criticise the speculations of recent authors, like Mr. Mill or Mr. Herbert Spencer, because, however interesting, they have not yet acquired historical importance. We shall, however, find frequent occasion to allude to, and sometimes to comment on, these speculations in the subsequent course of the work.

The above account of previous writers will, it is hoped, be found of advantage, as enabling the reader to perceive the bearing and importance of much of what follows.

[1] Mr. Austin, in his Lectures on Jurisprudence (Lect. v), says that 'the only existing approach to a solution of this problem is to be found in the writings of Mr. Bentham.'

For the authors whom we have noticed all called attention to important aspects of the subject, and erred not so much in positive mis-statement as in the omission of some essential consideration. Thus, Hobbes drew special attention to the action of law in modifying conduct and to the strength of the self-regarding feelings, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler to the existence of the benevolent and more distinctively moral side of human nature, Mandeville to what may be called the semi-social feelings, Hartley to the influence of association in the formation of our more complex states of mind, and Bentham to the necessity of an external test of actions. The proper and more formal mode of studying the subject is, undoubtedly, by investigating, for ourselves, our mental phenomena, the moral history of mankind, and the tendencies of actions, but it will, we presume, be found useful, not only in the way of suggestion but also of verification, first to have considered, in some of its broader outlines, the history of moral theory, as it has been presented by some of the more popular and instructive writers of past generations [1].

[1] Σκεπτέον δὴ περὶ αὐτῆς οὐ μόνον ἐκ τοῦ συμπεράσματος καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν λεγομένων περὶ αὐτῆς· τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεῖ πάντα συιᾴδει τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, τῷ δὲ ψευδεῖ ταχὺ διαφωνεῖ τἀληθές. Aristotle, Eth. Nic. i. 8 (1).

Ἀνάγκη πρὸς τὴν ζητουμένην ἐπιστήμην ἐπελθεῖν ἡμᾶς πρῶτον, περὶ ὧν ἀπορῆσαι δεῖ πρῶτον· ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶν ὅσα τε περὶ αὐτῶν ἄλλως ὑπειλήφασί τινες, κἂν εἴ τι χωρὶς τούτων τυγχάνοι παρεωραμένον. Ἔστι δὲ τοῖς εὐπορῆσαι βουλομένοις προύργου τὸ διαπορῆσαι καλῶς· ἡ γὰρ ὕστερον εὐπορία λύσις τῶν πρότερον ἀπορουμένων ἐστί, λύειν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγνοοῦντας τὸν δεσμόν. Metaph. B. 1.

CHAPTER III.

On the Method of Morals.

THERE are, speaking generally, two methods, in accordance with one or other of which the science of Morals may be treated—the one *a priori*, the other *a posteriori*,—though there are, doubtless, many forms or applications of each.

The *a priori* method, or any form of it, transcendental or intuitive, we deliberately set aside. All such methods appear to us to take for granted what requires explanation or proof, and to be incapable of establishing a satisfactory system of morals.

We adopt an *a posteriori* method, basing moral ideas and principles on such facts as admit of verification by experience and observation.

Most moralists indeed have adopted this method, only directing their observations to widely differing classes of phenomena. The early moralists who employed it observed chiefly the phenomena of their own minds, 'interrogated their own consciousness.' This use of the method, which has recently been called *introspective*, was extremely imperfect, and could carry them but a very little way in moral research. It enabled them to give no account of the influence of circumstances on the formation or modi-

fication of mind and character; it did not supply the means of analysing complex states of thought and feeling into simpler elements, or of distinguishing permanent and elementary from acquired principles of action; still less did it enable them to verify or correct the prevailing morality. Soon however the moralist perceives that knowledge of the mind and character of others is calculated to reflect light upon his own. Knowledge of other nations, intercourse with men existing under other circumstances, enlarges his range of observation, supplies facts which tend to modify his theories, and suggests questions of greater depth and interest. It is not however until it has embraced a large and comprehensive study of the history of man in all its parts that the *a posteriori* method is able to prove its efficacy in regard to morals. In the history and growth of the human race[1] it finds most of the materials necessary for its inductions, and for answering the various problems which a moralist is concerned to solve.

These questions may all be comprehended under one or other of the following: What is man? Of what improvement is he capable? To know man in order to elevate and improve him is the great task of the moralist.

In the answer to these questions others of subsidiary importance will arise, as for instance the nature of moral

[1] The reader who is familiar with recent works on the Early History of Society, such as those of Sir H. Maine, Sir J. Lubbock, and Mr. Tylor, hardly needs to be reminded that in the study of the moral history of man, as in that of his development generally, we must not confine our observations to any single race or nation. The study of extant societies in an early stage of civilisation is peculiarly valuable, as supplying an account of periods through which the more advanced societies have at one time passed, but of which almost all traces have often become obliterated. By this comparative treatment we are enabled to regard the history of mankind as a whole, and whether we are tracing the evolution of morality, of law, of art, or the like, to connect it with the common principles of human nature from which it proceeds.

obligation, the nature and extent of human freedom, and others of a similar character.

What is man? The answer to this question is supplied, as we have indicated in the first chapter, in part by Physiology, but to a still greater degree from Psychology, which latter science must derive its facts mainly from history. In the history of man we see his intellectual faculties and his active and moral powers in full play. We gather from it the sort of intellectual power he is capable of exerting, the limits within which it is usefully exercised, and the successive steps by which it has reached a true conception of its nature, its strength and weakness[1]; the condition of the various desires, emotions, and active principles, and their relations to each other at different periods in his progress towards civilisation. We discover also the circumstances most favourable to the development of man's higher energies and more generous feelings, and therefore best suited to his nature. In history we find recorded the different phases, intellectual and moral, through which man has passed and the general direction in which he is moving, and we see plainly that this direction is the resultant of the forces, internal and external, that influence him. It enables us to see the point from which we have started, and whither we are going; to distinguish in our civilisation what belongs to the past and what to the future, and thereby to determine to some extent wherein progress consists; further, to appreciate the causes which advance or retard the moral well-being of mankind. This process directs

[1] 'When we know our own strength, we shall the better know what to undertake with hopes of success: and when we have well surveyed the powers of our own minds, and made some estimate what we may expect from them, we shall not be inclined either to sit still and not set our thoughts on work at all, in despair of knowing anything; nor, on the other side, question everything, and disclaim all knowledge, because some things are not to be understood.' Locke's Essay, Introd. § 6.

and animates our endeavours after improvement, and gives us confidence in the final ascendancy of what is good. 'The causes of sympathy,' says Dumont, 'are permanent and necessary, of antipathy accidental and transient.'

Later moralists, as we remarked in the second chapter, have handled morals less from a psychological than a practical point of view. They seek to frame rules of conduct by reference to the effects of such rules on the happiness of men. For this purpose they have sought a criterion of what is best for man in the abstract, and found it in the 'utility' of actions, i.e. their tendency to increase the sum of human pleasure. As already indicated, this method, applied as it usually is, furnishes but a rough test, available indeed for the statesman or jurist, but, unless combined with other considerations, inadequate for the purposes of the moralist, and this for the simple reason that it omits the previous question of what man is and what are his highest and most characteristic energies. To be able to calculate the effect of habits and institutions on the happiness of men, and still more on their moral character, it is necessary that we should bring to the task all the knowledge of man and of society which we can obtain from history. History, it is truly said, is philosophy teaching by examples, and this concrete method of studying the consequences of actions is more conclusive than any abstract method can possibly be. It is not to be supposed that philosophers till recent times altogether overlooked the lessons of history in their endeavours to calculate the consequences of actions. It is only the systematic and conscious application of this method of dealing with the subject that distinguishes the more recent from the earlier writers, and has gained for their treatment of social and moral questions the name of the *historical method.*

Further, it should be remembered that the question

before the mind of the practical moralist generally is, not what is best for man in the abstract, but what is best for him at a particular stage of intellectual and social advancement. This consideration, indeed, Bentham has, to some extent, entertained in the treatise entitled by Dumont, 'De l'Influence des Temps et des Lieux en matière de Législation[1].'

We see therefore that the historical question cannot be dispensed with. If disregarded in the first instance it will meet us at some point or other; and, if still neglected, great mischief will be the inevitable result. Besides, it should always be remembered that philosophers are under the influence of views and opinions resulting partly from peculiarities of temper or constitution in themselves, and partly from the social influences by which they are surrounded, and that such prepossessions can only be corrected by the study of the facts which history presents to them. But what is most of all important to the practical moralist is, that history will familiarise him with the idea of development or evolution, shewing him that institutions or habits are not accidental in their origin, or mere devices of the legislator; that they have grown up for the most part by virtue of tendencies in human nature, modified and directed by external circumstances, and that these tendencies should be understood by all who seek to direct them. This consideration will teach us the precaution necessary in dealing with prevalent ideas and customs, and prevent us from making attempts to modify them without due preparation. On the other hand, by studying the circumstances in which moral ideas or rules

[1] Dumont, Traités de Législation, tom. iii. The expanded title of the treatise is 'Dissertation sur les différences que doivent apporter dans les lois les circonstances des temps et des lieux, ou solution de ce problème: Les meilleures lois étant données, comment le législateur doit-il les modifier d'après les considérations temporaires et locales?'

had their origin we shall be better able to see whether they are suitable to the present condition of mankind, or whether the necessity for them has ceased. History, in short, enables us to understand and appreciate the present; it enables us to some extent to anticipate the future, and the knowledge which it supplies is an indispensable condition of all wise attempts at moral and social improvement.

And in regard to those problems of which we spoke as incidental to the subject, there is none on which the historical method of study does not throw light. What, for instance, is the nature of moral obligation? One moralist tells us it results from some form or modification of self-love: another, from some form of sympathy: another, from religious feeling; and so on. Now the moral history of mankind shows us that the feeling on the subject of moral rules has been different at different times and under different circumstances, just as it is in the minds of different individuals at the present time. Thus the comparisons which history supplies go far to remove all difficulty from the subject, shewing that there is no one of the great elements of human nature which is not capable under certain circumstances of exercising an obligatory influence upon the will, and that the strongest possible obligation must consist in the harmonious action of all these principles together, as we shall shew more particularly in the chapter on the Moral Feeling. Even on such a question as that of the nature and extent of human freedom, historical study throws much light. We see that man tends to become more and more free from the influence of passion, less and less the slave of present inclination, more and more capable of resisting a present gratification in comparison of a future good to himself or others; in short, more and more capable of following

reason. It points out the causes by which self-control or the power of self-determination are produced,—such as the operation of Law, direct or indirect, in checking habitual violence, punishing outbreaks of passion, and gradually associating the idea of punishment with the absence of self-restraint; such again as domestic discipline, social influences, moral and religious education. It shews that freedom in the great mass of mankind is a slow and gradual growth, and that we become free from evil by becoming slaves of good. Further, without the power of perception which the study of history gives us we cannot approach the consideration of any moral quality or rule with the appropriate feeling on the subject. Hutcheson could see no merit in prudence. The reason is that he compared it with the higher and more admirable quality of sympathy. Had he compared it with the apathy and indifference of the primitive man, he would have seen that it indicated a great advance on the qualities originally predominant in the human race, and that it was an indispensable condition of further improvement. For it implies a more developed intelligence to forecast the future, a more active imagination enabling us to regard future pleasure and pain as present to the will, and consequently greater freedom from inclination and present passion. One of the most difficult and by far the most important tasks of the moralist is to create in the student a strong and discriminative feeling on the subject of morality, to shew its many beneficent effects, and what man would be without it; and this apart from its history is impossible.

As the method applied with so much vigour by Bentham has exercised a very great influence since his time on all

writers who have treated moral philosophy or an *a posteriori* basis, it will be necessary in the present chapter to say something on the subject. We shall, however, revert to it on another occasion.

The peculiarity of Bentham's method consists in an attempt to substitute for what he considered the vague expressions of previous moralists, namely, happiness and misery, the more precise expressions pleasure and pain, and to lay down certain rules for the comparison and estimation of them.

In the Principles of Morals and Legislation, the value of what is called 'a lot of pleasure or pain' is measured by seven circumstances: (1) its *intensity*, (2) its *duration*, (3) its *certainty* or *uncertainty*, (4) its *propinquity* or *remoteness*, (5) its *fecundity*, or 'the chance it has of being followed by sensations of the *same* kind,' (6) its *purity*, or 'the chance it has of *not* being followed by sensations of the *opposite* kind,' (7) its *extent*, that is, 'the number of persons to whom it *extends*, or, in other words, who are affected by it.' The process of measurement is best described in Bentham's own words:

'To take an exact account, then, of the general tendency of any act, by which the interests of a community are affected, proceed as follows. Begin with any one person of those whose interests seem most immediately to be affected by it: and take an account,

'1. Of the value of each distinguishable *pleasure* which appears to be produced by it in the *first* instance.

'2. Of the value of each *pain* which appears to be produced by it in the *first* instance.

'3. Of the value of each pleasure which appears to be produced by it *after* the first. This constitutes the *fecundity* of the first *pleasure* and the *impurity* of the first *pain*.

'4. Of the value of each *pain* which appears to be

produced by it after the first. This constitutes the *fecundity* of the first *pain*, and the *impurity* of the first pleasure.

'5. Sum up all the values of all the *pleasures* on the one side, and those of all the pains on the other. The balance, if it be on the side of pleasure, will give the *good* tendency of the act upon the whole, with respect to the interests of that *individual* person; if on the side of pain, the *bad* tendency of it upon the whole.

'6. Take an account of the *number* of persons whose interests appear to be concerned; and repeat the above process with respect to each. *Sum up* the numbers expressive of the degrees of *good* tendency, which the act has with respect to each individual, in regard to whom the tendency of it is *good* upon the whole: do this again with respect to each individual, in regard to whom the tendency of it is *bad* upon the whole. Take the *balance*; which, if on the side of *pleasure*, will give the general *good tendency* of the act, with respect to the total number or community of individuals concerned; if on the side of pain, the general *evil tendency*, with respect to the same community.

'It is not to be expected that this process should be strictly pursued previously to every moral judgment, or to every legislative or judicial operation. It may, however, be always kept in view: and as near as the process actually pursued on these occasions approaches to it, so near will such process approach to the character of an exact one[1].'

The most obvious objection to Bentham's language with respect to this process of balancing pleasures and pains is that it appears at first sight to ignore the great mass of moral judgments which mankind has already formed, and to regard every question as open to constant revision. It might be replied, on behalf of Bentham, that though,

[1] Principles of Morals and Legislation, ch. 4 §§ 5, 6.

theoretically, no question of ethics can be regarded as definitely closed, the process which has been above described is one which mankind has, consciously or unconsciously, been employing through all the past generations of its history, and that to doubt the propriety of its verdict in all or the majority of cases would be absolute folly. At the same time, it is the precise province of the moralist and the legislator from time to time to review and, if need be, to modify established institutions and current opinions, while, even in the conduct of private life there occur innumerable cases in which it is necessary to form an independent judgment for ourselves. It is, it might be said, rather with a view to supply us with the materials for such occasional judgments and reviews that Bentham proposes his criterion, than with the deliberate aim of calling in question and reconstituting the whole aggregate of those moral and social maxims the truth of which is presupposed in almost every action of our lives. The decisions of previous generations are not and can not be ignored by any system of moral philosophy, but philosophy demands that they shall be open to criticism and re-examination, and it is the special function of the philosopher to provide a criterion for this purpose. Society has, however, in its turn, a right to require that this criterion shall not be employed lightly or by inexperienced hands, and that its results, if they contravene established opinion, shall, for a while at least, be regarded with distrust and caution.

But it is a still more serious objection to Bentham that, in his treatment of pleasures and pains, he lays so little stress on that distinction of the *higher* and *lower* pleasures which was so much insisted on by the older moralists. To say that he entirely ignores this distinction would be inaccurate. After determining the circumstances by which all

pleasures and pains are to be measured, he proceeds to enumerate the various kinds of pleasures and pains. In the list of pleasures are comprised: 1. The pleasures of sense. 2. The pleasures of wealth. 3. The pleasures of skill. 4. The pleasures of amity. 5. The pleasures of a good name. 6. The pleasures of power. 7. The pleasures of piety. 8. The pleasures of benevolence. 9. The pleasures of malevolence. 10. The pleasures of memory. 11. The pleasures of imagination. 12. The pleasures of expectation. 13. The pleasures dependent on association. 14. The pleasures of relief[1]. In a subsequent chapter, 'On Motives[2],' a motive is described as 'substantially nothing more than pleasure or pain, operating in a certain manner,' and, of the motives corresponding to the various pleasures and pains, it is determined that 'good-will is that of which the dictates, taken in a general view, are surest of coinciding with those of the principle of utility[3].' Next in order follow the love of reputation, the desire of amity, religion, and the self-regarding motives; the motive of displeasure, from a general point of view, coming last. But, though the motives, and the corresponding pleasures, are, as respects their influence on the general happiness of mankind, arranged in this order, there appears to be no recognition of any difference in pleasures founded on the higher or lower character of our desires and feelings. And yet, in almost all previous systems of morals, such a difference had been recognised as essential. Nor are the words 'higher' and 'lower,' in this connexion, employed in any vague or indefinite sense. By the higher desires and feelings are usually meant those which are characteristic of human nature, such as the love of knowledge, the æsthetic sentiments, the religious aspirations, sympathy, and the like, while by the lower are meant those which we share with

[1] Ch 5. § 2. [2] Ch. 10. [3] § 36.

the lower animals. Now the pleasures which result from the gratification of the former class of desires or capacities are by most moralists spoken of as being higher *in kind* than those which spring from the gratification of the latter, and this language appears to us to be substantially correct.

As this distinction is of great importance in the theory of morals, it may be well briefly to advert to the consilience of inductions by which we regard it as established. Comparing man with the lower animals, we find that, as we ascend the animal series, there is a constantly increasing development of intelligence. Even in some of the lower animals, we notice marvellous indications of the power of adapting means to ends, of shaping their lives in accordance with surrounding circumstances, and even of prudence, foresight, fidelity, and sympathy. But in all the higher manifestations of these qualities, and still more in the almost indefinite capacity for improvement which seems specially to distinguish man, there is no occasion to insist on the enormous gulf which separates him from the rest of the animal creation. Now, as there are pleasures and pains corresponding to all parts of man's organisation, it is reasonable to suppose that the most distinctive (and therefore, in our view, the highest) pleasures and pains are those which correspond to the most distinctive part of his constitution. Hence it seems to follow, from a comparison of the animal world, that the pleasures attendant on the exercise of intelligence, and those moral and æsthetical pleasures of which intelligence is the indispensable condition, are the highest and the most distinctive of man. Again, if we proceed to examine human nature itself, either by tracing the evolution of a single society, or by comparing men existing in different stages of civilisation, we shall find that in point of skill, intelligence, creative power, sense of beauty, depth and refinement of moral feeling,

purity of religious sentiment, there is almost an immeasurable distance between what are called the higher and what are called the lower types of mankind, and even between individual men belonging to the same race or country. But these qualities could not be developed, unless men took a pleasure in their exercise, or, at least, felt dissatisfaction at their absence. We may go even further, and say that they could not be developed, unless men took a greater pleasure in their exercise, or, at least, felt a greater dissatisfaction at their absence, than they experienced in the gratification or disappointment of their lower desires. Thus, the considerations suggested by biology, anthropology, and history lead, by a similar path, to the same conclusions.

It follows from what we have said that there is no precise mode of comparing one pleasure with another, even in our own case, while it is even more difficult to do this in the case of others. We cannot put one 'lot of pleasure' into one scale and another into another and determine, by any accurate standard, the difference between the two, nor even always which of the two is preponderant. We can only consider the general tendencies of actions, and form a rough estimate of the result, though, happily, in the great majority of cases, there can be no practical doubt as to the side to which the balance inclines. But mankind is always performing this process for itself, and, though the philosopher may usefully modify or correct its conclusions, he must beware of supposing that there is any essential difference between his own method and that which is half unconsciously pursued by society at large. The study of history and of different extant forms of society supplies us with an account of the growth, or rather development, of morality, that is, of the half unconscious generalisations by which man has, from time to

time, adapted himself to the circumstances in which he is placed, while the treatment of the subject now under discussion consciously analyses all the constituents of conduct, and estimates all our actions, as well as the dispositions from which they spring, by reference to the ultimate ends of life. The one process is more or less automatic, the other is wholly conscious and reflective. The latter, therefore, may be corrective of, and supplementary to, the former, but, inasmuch as from the nature of the case it can be performed by only a few individuals, whereas the former is the result of the work of countless generations of men placed under the most various circumstances, it can never be of itself adequate to the construction of a moral system. No one, probably, would be so absurd as to maintain that a few philosophers could, simply by considering the tendencies of actions and without any reference to existing moral sentiment, draw up a complete list of the rules of conduct. And yet some writers have employed such unguarded language, that it might seem as if they supposed this to be the case.

We have said that our method is the *a posteriori* as opposed to the *a priori* method of enquiry. But the *a posteriori* method must undergo considerable modifications according to the special subject-matter of the science to which it is applied. In some cases we can only observe, as, for instance, in astronomy, while in others, as in chemistry, we may contrive artificial experiments which enable us to determine the nature and attributes of the substances we examine. We can touch and handle them, break them to pieces, subject them to the action of fire or acids, and so analyse them into their constituents. In the study of the animal nature, where direct experiment is for the most

part to be avoided, we find materials for our inductions in successive comparisons, which enable us to dissect or analyse the organism, discern the structure and functions of the several parts, and determine its character as a whole. Again, in the comparisons of history, we have the means of studying the growth and development of man and of society, and the limits within which we may hope to modify them with advantage. It is chiefly in this last form that the *a posteriori* method is applied to the investigation of social and moral phenomena; and such a method, it appears to us, is more comprehensive and more penetrating, more powerful, not only as a solvent, but for purposes of conservation and construction, than any *a priori* method can be.

Many will object to the historical treatment of morals on the ground that it tends to foster the belief that morality is 'relative and arbitrary[1].' The moral history of mankind shews that morality is, and must be, relative: relative to the nature of man and the conditions of his existence. It shews us further that if moral distinctions be relative, they cannot be arbitrary, for it indicates both the causes of their variation and its limits. And those causes can never be wholly eliminated, nor the limits of their variation ever transcended.

The history of all sciences shews us that it is long before the true method of studying them is completely understood. The method of a science for the most part grows up with the science itself, and cannot anticipate it. 'Artem inveniendi,' says Bacon[2], 'cum inventis adolescere posse, statuere debemus.' It is only when the scope and object of the science is rightly understood that its method is correctly appreciated. Take, for instance, the case of chemistry. For a long time the alchemist sought to transmute metals, to find the philosopher's stone—in fact,

[1] Cp. ch. 2. pp 43 44. [2] Novum Organum, Bk. 1. Aph. 130.

to perform miracles. With this object in view, he contrived many experiments, and doubtless made many valuable discoveries. It was only by slow degrees and after many trials that philosophers found the true scope and object of chemical science, i. e. the determination of the laws qualitative and quantitative which govern the combination of substances. When this object was once clearly perceived, experiments were still made, but they were contrived for a definite purpose and directed to a definite end. So it has been with Sociology and Psychology. It is perhaps too much to say that these sciences have grown up with the historical method. But, at all events, their true character has been better understood since this method has been systematically applied. We now perceive more clearly what questions we ought to put, and the kind of satisfaction we ought to expect in answer to them. The historical treatment has given a new impulse and a different direction to these studies, and it has supplied materials for the solution of the various difficulties connected with them which are derivable from no other source. It has set aside or discouraged all abstract and speculative treatment in the handling of them, and made them truly inductive. It has taught us that there are laws or tendencies in the evolution of man and of society, which we are bound to respect even while we seek to modify them. But great as are the services which the systematic study of history and society has rendered to the science of morals in recent times, we must beware of exaggerating what the conscious pursuit of even a correct method can do for us. For one of our gravest difficulties is to discover from history the laws or tendencies which make history itself intelligible. Still more difficult is it with any approach to certainty to construct from history rules for the guidance of man in the future. This is the

work of genius. It is enough if we can indicate what a true method can effect for this purpose. Genius may, to a certain extent, dispense with method or logical directions, but no method will enable the philosopher who seeks to legislate for mankind to dispense with genius. 'Nostra via inveniendi scientias exæquat fere ingenia,' says Francis Bacon[1], but this aphorism is now justly regarded as an exaggeration. History supplies the moralist with materials for his conclusions, but the selection and proper use of the materials requires imagination and constructive power, controlled by an analytical study of man and of his circumstances, such as is only found in the great masters of moral science from the time of Socrates to the present day.

Approaching the study of man from the points of view already indicated, we distinguish, first, the functions subservient to the nourishment of the organism. With these are connected the several appetites, reminding us periodically of the wants and necessities of the organic system. The supply of these wants in the lower stages of civilisation, as in the lower animals, constitutes the great and dominant object of life. In the earlier periods of society the struggle with nature is so intense, that the effort to supply food and shelter and to ward off external injuries absorbs almost all man's energies.

In this condition the resentful passions naturally ally themselves with the self-regarding propensions, or with those narrow sympathies which alone the primitive man entertains. The higher tendencies of his nature, being as yet partially or wholly undeveloped, have little influence in counteracting or modifying his lower.

Gradually, as man under favourable conditions gains a

[1] Novum Organum, Bk. 1. Aph. 122.

mastery over nature, the selfish passions become less absorbing, the higher, i. e. the more characteristic, elements gain ground and limit or modify the action of such as are less characteristic. The instruments by which this transition is mainly effected are those sexual and parental instincts, the satisfaction of which, while they bring him into necessary relations with others, cannot but awaken even in the primitive man feelings of love and tenderness for those who excite in him no sense of fear or rivalry. Gradually these sympathies widen till they embrace the whole human race, ending in a regard for our fellow-men alike rational and disinterested, and giving scope and direction both to our active and intellectual energies in the pursuit of the well-being of others. Man thus gains a new and distinct object of regard, and experiences emotions which, as there is less occasion for indulging the selfish and malignant passions, gradually assert themselves, by reason of their peculiar and intrinsic sweetness. This regard for humanity, so unlike the primitive selfishness and wilfulness of mankind, resembles so little the lower propensities of our nature, that a just instinct in man has regarded it as a divine element in his nature—an attribute common to man with his Maker. The life of humanity or benevolence too has been regarded as divine in comparison with the lower life of selfishness, and as bringing with it pleasures remarkable for their sweetness, their purity, and their elevation.

It is found that these principles, self-regarding and social, cannot regulate or guide themselves. They require direction and intelligent control. This want gives occasion for the exercise of the reason, whose function it is to regulate, control, and adjust all the various principles of our nature, and adapt them to the varying conditions of our existence.

Further, that peculiar feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which accompanies the reflexion on our own conduct

or the conduct of others, generates in us, in combination with reason, a special moral faculty; and this faculty, including both a rational and emotional element, not only passes judgment on our past actions, but contributes in no small degree to shape our future behaviour. Thus, morality, enabling us to conquer the difficulties of our position, and still more to endure patiently and with rational resignation those ills which we cannot by any effort avoid, opens to us a view of the dignity or moral worth of man to which nothing in this world bears any resemblance. It produces moreover pleasures at once ennobling and consolatory, which differ in character from all other pleasures, and seem to constitute a diviner happiness.

It is this consciousness of moral worth working obscurely in the heart of man which strengthens and supports the hope and belief in another life, in which the diviner elements in human nature shall constitute our whole existence, where, purified from all taint of original selfishness, we shall live in the enjoyment of those elevating pleasures which seem so alien to the lower and more animal part of our nature.

Intelligence again, which in the primitive condition of man, as in the lower animals, is confined in its range by the fears and wants which an abject and necessitous condition prescribes to it, gradually asserts itself. Its curiosity is enlarged; it devises means to ends, rising continually higher and higher, and constructing the several arts and industries necessary to the convenience and adornment of life. From the arts and practical methods it rises to science, pursuing truth in a manner perfectly abstract, and therefore necessarily disinterested. Lastly, this principle produces pleasures of the most ennobling and elevating character, which the most eminent of the Greek philosophers, recognising therein the divine element of

human nature, has pronounced to transcend all others, being admirable alike for their purity and their stability[1].

Following the indications here laid down, we now proceed to treat of the leading principles of our nature. We shall study, in each case, the nature, office, and importance of these several principles, tracing, to a certain extent, their history, or, in other words, examining the forms they have assumed under the varying conditions of man's existence, and endeavouring to ascertain the direction in which they are moving. This enquiry will necessarily include the consideration of their due regulation, and their relation and adjustment to each other.

[1] *Ἡδίστη δὲ τῶν κατ' ἀρετὴν ἐνεργειῶν ἡ κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν ὁμολογουμένως ἐστίν· δοκεῖ γοῦν ἡ φιλοσοφία θαυμαστὰς ἡδονὰς ἔχειν καθαριότητι καὶ τῷ βεβαίῳ, εὔλογον δὲ τοῖς εἰδόσι τῶν ζητούντων ἡδίω τὴν διαγωγὴν εἶναι.* Ar. Eth. Nic. x 7 3).

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